Behaving Like Fools

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Behaving Like Fools

Voice, Gesture, and Laughter in Texts, Manuscripts, and Early Books

Edited by

Lucy Perry and Alexander Schwarz

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Contents

List of Illustrations vii

Preface xi

List of Abbreviations xiii

Introduction 1
ALEXANDER SCHWARZ AND LUCY PERRY

Traditions of Simulated Folly in *The Canterbury Interlude and Tale of Beryn* 15
GUILLEMETTE BOLENS

A Fool and a Troubadour: Folly in the Legend of Peire Vidal 47
SUSANNA NIIRANEN

An Anglo-Norman Fool in Constantinople: *Der Pfaffe Amis* 65
CORDULA BÖCKING-POLITIS

Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* and its Woodcuts 81
SIEGRID SCHMIDT

Eulenspiegel Meets Nasreddin: A Fools' Contest 109
ALEXANDER SCHWARZ

After the Laughter: Discipline Through Narration. The Fool's Didactics in Wolfgang Büttner's Jocular Prose Tales (*Schwänke*) Featuring Claus Narr (1572) 129
PETER GLASNER

Playing the Fool: Eccentric Behaviour and Political Acumen in Wace's *Roman de Rou* 153
FRANÇOISE LE SAUX

'Marcel far to helle: ȝ tel heom þer spelles' (*Brut*, line 13245): 'Off' Jokes and Crude Behaviour in Lawman's *Brut* 171
ROSAMUND ALLEN

A Small History of Laughter, or When Laughter Has to Be Reasonable 193
STEFAN BIEßENECKER

'Cel neim [...] est fols': 'Fool-like' Dwarfs and the Irony of Fictionality in French Texts around 1200 223
TANJA-ISABEL HABICHT

The Issue of Madness in Tristan Romances 243
PATRIZIA MAZZADI

'What kind of fool am I?': The Tragi-comedy of the Love Potion in the Thomas/Gottfried Branch of the Tristan Legend 259
NEIL THOMAS

Don't Make Me Laugh! Fooling Around in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 277
LUCY PERRY

Index 295

Illustrations

Figure 1, p. 53. Peire Vidal with communicative hand gesture (Troubadour Manuscript I), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 854, fol. 39.

Figure 2, p. 85. 'Of Good Advice' (*cap*. 2). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 3, p. 87. 'Of Too Much Worry' (*cap*. 24). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 4, p. 87. 'Of Procrastination' (*cap*. 31). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 5, p. 89. 'A Ship of Journeymen' (*cap*. 48). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 6, p. 89. 'Of the Antichrist' (*cap*. 103). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 7, p. 92. 'Of Donating and Repenting' (*cap*. 96). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 8, p. 92. 'Of Depressed Fools' (*cap*. 78). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 9, p. 93. 'Of Courting at Night' (*cap*. 62). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 10, p. 94. 'Of Old Fools' (*cap*. 5). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 11, p. 95. 'Of Educating Children' (*cap*. 6). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 12, p. 95. 'Of Thoughtless Fools' (*cap*. 12). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 13, p. 96. 'Of the Hope for Inheriting' (*cap*. 94). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 14, p. 96. 'Of Laziness and Indolence' (*cap*. 97). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 15, p. 97. 'The Teaching of Wisdom' (*cap*. 22). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 16, p. 98. 'Of the Power of the Fools' (*cap*. 46). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 17, p. 98. 'The Wise Man' (*cap*. 112). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 18, p. 99. 'Of Envy and Hate' (*cap*. 53). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 19, p. 100. 'Of Useless Books' (*cap*. 1). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 20, p. 101. 'The Author's Apology' (*cap*. 111). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 21, p. 101. 'To Express Disapproval of Fools' (*cap*. 40). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 22, p. 103. 'Not to Follow Good Advice' (*cap*. 8). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 23, p. 103. 'Of Serving Two Masters' (*cap*. 18). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 24, p. 104. 'Of Being Angry Easily' (*cap*. 35). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 25, p. 104. 'Of the End of Power' (*cap*. 56). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Figure 26, p. 198. 'The Last Judgement', tympanum of the Prince's Portal, Bamberg Cathedral (Bamberger Dom St Peter und St Georg), Germany.

Figure 27, p. 198. 'The Last Judgement' (detail), the blessed on the left, tympanum of the Prince's Portal, Bamberg Cathedral (Bamberger Dom St Peter und St Georg), Germany.

Figure 28, p. 198. 'The Last Judgement' (detail), the damned on the right, tympanum of the Prince's Portal, Bamberg Cathedral (Bamberger Dom St Peter und St Georg), Germany.

Preface

The period from 1200 to 1600 was the golden age of fools. From representations of irreverent acts to full-blown insanity, fools appeared on the misericords of gothic churches and in the plots of Arthurian narratives, before achieving a wider prominence in literature and iconography in the decades around 1500. But how are we to read these figures appropriately? Is it possible to reconstruct the fascination that fools exerted on the medieval and early modern mind? While modern theories give us the analytical tools to explore this subject, we are faced with the paradox that by striving to understand fools and foolishness we impose on them rational categories, precisely a process that fools exist to challenge. Together these essays propose a way out of this dilemma. Instead of attempting to define the fool or trying to find the common denominator behind his many masks, this volume focuses on the words and acts that signify foolishness, on voices, gestures, and laughter that trigger laughing, voiced and gestural responses. By investigating different manifestations of foolery rather than the figure of the fool himself, we can begin to understand the proliferation of fools and foolish behaviour in the texts and illustrations of manuscripts and early books.

The idea of this volume of essays came from the International Medieval Congress, Leeds, 2006, inspired by that year's special thematic strand, Emotion and Gesture. The Oswald von Wolkenstein-Gesellschaft proposed and sponsored two sessions on medieval and early modern fools. Many of the papers published herein were presented in an early version at these sessions. Others have been written especially for the volume.

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Lucy Perry and Alexander Schwarz

Abbreviations

EETS	Early English Text Society
GAG	Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik
LexMA	*Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 9 vols and index; I–VI (Munich: Artemis & Winkler, 1980–93); VII–IX (Munich: LexMA - Verlag, 1995–98)
MED	MED Online <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica inde ab anno *c.* 500 AD annum 1500, ed. by G. H. Pertz and others (Hannover, Berlin, etc.: Hahn, Weidmann, etc., 1826–)
Capit. episc.	Capitula episcoporum
Poetae	Poetae Latini medii aevi
SS	Scriptores (in folio)
SS rer. Germ. i.u.s.	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi
SS rer. Germ. N.S.	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova series
SS rer. Merov.	Scriptores rerum merovingicarum
OED	Oxford English Dictionary Online <http://www.oed.com/>
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Garnier-Migne, 1815–75)
ZfdPh	*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*

Introduction

Alexander Schwarz and Lucy Perry

> [M]an weiß noch immer viel zu wenig, ja genau genommen kaum etwas über das zeitgenössische Verständnis, die zeitgenössische Begründung, Rechtfertigung und Bewertung des Narren [...] wesens.[1]
>
> [We still know too little, to be precise almost nothing, about the contemporary understanding, the contemporary justification and evaluation of the institution of the fool.]

Fools are a distinctive feature, if not an emblem, of late medieval and early modern Europe. Even if they can be traced back to antiquity[2] and have survived in modern urban carnival,[3] they evoke the Middle Ages — as in the cartoon series *The Wizard of Id* — or the early modern period — as in the example of Stanczyk, jester at the court of the Polish king Zygmunt Stary, immortalized in the paintings by Matejko. Medieval and early modern courts hosted jesters, sometimes many, as in the case of Emperor Maximilian, and noble ladies kept female fools or dwarfs, as shown in *Las Meninas*, the famous painting by Velasquez.[4] For early modern Europe, Werner Mezger distinguishes three categories of fools: fools in 'social reality', in illustrations, and in carnival. These categories are further subdivided, and each subdivision has their natural and artificial forms.[5] If evidence

[1] Heinz-Günter Schmitz, *Das Hofnarrenwesen der frühen Neuzeit: Claus Narr von Torgau und seine Geschichten*, Dichtung-Wahrheit-Sprache, 1 (Münster: LIT, 2004).

[2] Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935).

[3] Werner Mezger, *Narrenidee und Fastnachtsbrauch* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1991).

[4] Fr[iedrich] Nick, *Die Hofnarren: Lustigmacher, Possenreißer und Volksnarren älterer und neuerer Zeiten* (Stuttgart: Scheible, 1861).

[5] Mezger, *Narrenidee und Fastnachtsbrauch*, p. 27.

for the 'social reality' of fools is harder to claim for the medieval period, particularly in England, their appearance in manuscript illuminations and illustrations and theological or moralizing discussion of them provide fools with an 'actuality'.[6] A first aim of the contributions in this volume is to review old and to introduce new evidence for the ubiquity of medieval and early modern fools.

The importance of fools calls for their definition and at the same time makes it difficult. Stefanie Poley, seeking a definition of the fool, found only antinomies: he was the wild man and the one who plays the wild man; the idiot or the maniac and the one who plays the idiot or the maniac; the dreamer and the breaker of dreams; Harlequin the aggressor and Pierrot the victim.[7] Schmitz adds to this the medieval opposition of the natural fool's innocence and the artificial fool's sinfulness and the contrast if not the contradiction between the natural fool as medium of the devil or of God,[8] whereas traditional texts like Nick's of 1861 keep repeating the opposition of stupid and wise, which goes back to St Paul's discussion of the 'stupidity' of the cross (I Cor. 1. 18) and to the Psalms. The fool and king in medieval illuminations accompanying the Psalms are mimicked in the York plays in which Christ is positioned beside Herod.[9]

All this seems to call for differentiation instead of definition. However, if there is one common denomination 'fool', might there not also be one concept 'fool'? Mikhail Bakhtin, in what he calls uncourtly and unheroic narratives of the early modern period, identifies a triad of protagonists: the *durak*, the *shut*, and the *plut*, the fool, the clown, and the rogue. Whilst these defining terms work well together as an all-encompassing scheme, as individual types of fool they have more overlapping traits than distinctive features.[10] Perhaps all the distinctions we make in this introduction will have to share this fate if we see that even the most obvious

[6] Sandra Billington, *A Social History of the Fool* (Brighton: Harvester Press; New York: St Martin's Press, 1984), p. ix, pp. 1–15. Cf. John Southworth, *Fools and Jesters at the English Court* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998).

[7] *Unter der Maske des Narren*, ed. by Stefanie Poley (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1981).

[8] Schmitz, *Das Hofnarrenwesen der frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 31–33 and p. 60.

[9] Cf. Clifford Davidson, 'Introduction', in *Fools and Folly*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series, 22 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), pp. 1–8 (p. 3); also Billington, *Social History of the Fool*, pp. 9–10.

[10] Cf. Guillemette Bolens, 'Les Fous et dissidents de Bakhtine, version anglaise', in *'Fripon, bouffon, sot': pour une relecture de Bakhtine*, ed. by Ekatarina Velmezova and Alexander Schwarz, Cahiers du Centre de Traduction Littéraire, 50 (Lausanne: Centre de Traduction Littéraire, 2008), pp. 201–20.

distinction, the one between natural and artificial fools, seems to be permeable. Sixteenth-century medical science as well as literary texts reduced the distance between natural and artificial folly by claiming that the ongoing practice of the latter could lead to the former. Schmitz quotes Felix Platter's *Observationes* and the story of the *Lalen* or *Schiltbürger*, a society of wise peasants who, weary from being asked for their advice again and again, feign folly until they really become foolish.[11]

If fools sometimes differ from each other in ways that defy generalization, they always differ more clearly from the unmarked, from the 'normal', and from the community of author and audience. The fool always and everywhere gives an impression of strangeness, of not belonging, also of timelessness — and of literariness. He helps with the creation of narrative by permanently generating what William Labov has defined as its distinctive feature, *complicating actions*, actions and events that we did not expect, that deviate from the 'normal current of events'.[12] The fool both creates and breaks fiction by addressing the audience, the reader or listener, rather than the other characters sharing the stage. He becomes a *trickster* who is at home, yet not at home, in both worlds.[13] So the other, if not *otherness* itself, may be not only the problem of definition of the fool, but at the same time its solution: the fool, we claim, is always the other.[14]

We maintain that the fool signals otherness and otherness signals the fool, at least if it is not too overwhelming, too frightening, or too monstrous. In the words of French Renaissance medical doctor Laurent Joubert, one could, in the tradition of Aristotle, speak of 'laideur sans douleur'.[15] But what kind of otherness and ugliness does the fool signal? The literature about fools tends to stress different clothing. From the twelfth century onwards illustrations and descriptions portray a naked natural fool with shaven head, a stick to defend himself, and perhaps a kind

[11] Schmitz, *Das Hofnarrenwesen der frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 41–42.

[12] William Labov, 'The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax', in *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), pp. 354–96.

[13] Cf. Heinz Wyss, *Der Narr im schweizerischen Drama des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Haupt, 1959). Joachim Herz, 'Der lustige Musikant oder Das Lied Bum Bum', in *Die lustige Person auf der Bühne*, ed. by Peter Csobàdi and others, 2 vols, Wort und Musik, 23 (Anif: Müller-Speiser, 1994), II, 721–31.

[14] Klaus Schuster, 'Idioten um 1500', in *Unter der Maske des Narren*, ed. by Poley, pp. 184–90 (p. 190).

[15] Dominique Bertrand, 'Anatomie et étymologie: ordre et désordre du rire selon Laurent Joubert', in *The Anatomy of Laughter*, ed. by Toby Garfitt, Edith McMorran, and Jane Taylor (London: Legenda, 2005), pp. 11–23 (p. 14). Cf. Stefan Bießenecker in this volume.

of cape. With the introduction of artificial fools gradually appear little bells, the marotte in place of the stick, the fool's cap with donkey ears and a cock's crest, and in the fifteenth century, at last the mi-parti costume.[16]

But is the iconography of the fool able to lead us to the core of the fool? Nick argued in 1861 that 'how changing taste dressed the fools does not matter at all' ('auf die Art, wie er sie äußerlich ausstaffirt, kommt nichts an').[17] And he is right. In Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* of 1494, discussed by Siegrid Schmidt in this volume, a dramatic problem with the iconographic approach becomes evident, the fool as metaphor. Although its woodcuts (some by Albrecht Dürer) show about a hundred iconographically unambiguous fools, the text does not describe but baptizes them when it repeatedly says: *He is a fool who ....* Brant's fools represent the weaknesses and vices of people like you and me (or like Brant and his readers). In other words, the *Narrenschiff* illustrations provide pictures of metaphors and proverbs whereas the text uses the metaphor of the fool to refer to non-fools behaving like fools.[18] While the text gives expression to the tenor or figurative aspect of a metaphor, the pictures represent the literal meaning of the metaphor, confounding vehicle and tenor. The woodcuts illustrate absurd actions which provide another level of ridicule beyond the text that interprets sinful behaviour as foolish behaviour.

One can argue that the prototype of the medieval fool, the Psalmist's fool, functions the same way. The famous words *Dicit insipiens in corde sua non est deus*[19] can very easily be translated as *He is a fool who says in his heart that there is no God* and much less as **The court jester says in his heart that there is no God* nor as **The natural fool says in his heart that there is no God.* Therefore the fool does not pre-exist, but is made a fool by his words. Furthermore, it would be absurd to subcategorize the fool. Like the *Ship of Fools*, the Psalms and their illustrations only work if they are not about pre-existing fools but about people who sin wilfully. If this reading of texts and pictures is correct, metaphorical fools play an important part within the abundance of medieval and early modern fools, forming a third group along with their natural and artificial colleagues.

[16] Cf. Georges Fréchet, 'Iconographie du fou dans l'art et dans la vie', in *La Nef des Folz* (Basel: Merian, 1994), pp. 117–32.

[17] Nick, *Die Hofnarren*, p. 61.

[18] Andreas Bässler, *Sprichwortbild und Sprichwortschwank: Zum illustrativen und narrativen Potential von Metaphern in der deutschsprachigen Literatur um 1500* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003).

[19] Psalms 13. 1 and 52. 1.

Brant and Psalters have always been treated as iconographic sources. The text that accompanies the images requires that we move beyond the portrait of the fool's exterior to his inherent qualities. But what inherent qualities do the natural and artificial and metaphorical fools share? If the way they look is not the criterion, how can we prove their group coherence? How too might we demonstrate their lack of coherence with the 'normality' surrounding them? The Psalmist and Brant provide an answer in their texts: fools all say (according to the Psalmist) and do (according to Brant) things that conscientious people would not do or say. Fools are people who behave like fools. This is true for all fools, the 'real' as well as the metaphorical. So the main point of this volume is to explore the hypothesis that the distinctive otherness of the fool is the otherness of his behaviour, of his performance, be it linguistic or gestural.

Nick in 1861 already indicated this direction without pursuing it himself: 'Sometimes they behaved so foolishly that one did not know whether to consider them as fools or as bright minds' ('manchmal benahmen sie sich so närrisch, dass man nicht wußte, ob man sie für Narren oder kluge Köpfe halten sollte').[20] This view is corroborated by Hans Rudolf Velten in his overview of court jesters when he identifies their 'transhistorically invariant' main duty and function as 'to entertain the ruler and the court via the licence to act and speak in many wises deviant from the norm'. In fulfilling this duty the fool not only symbolizes alterity but embodies it.[21]

Judith Butler, developing Austin's theory of illocutionary acts, has shown that the construction of gendered identity is due not to natural differences but to 'acts and utterances', and such a system of body linguistics proves useful in defining foolish identity.[22] Austin's distinction between *constative* and *performative* speech acts has been redefined by new philologists as the symbolic and the gestural aspect of human acts.[23] Butler, in her reading of Austin and of Don Juan, attaches

[20] Nick, *Die Hofnarren*, p. 49 (Schwarz's translation).

[21] Hans Rudolf Velten, 'Hofnarren', in *Höfe und Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich: Bilder und Begriffe*, ed. by Werner Paravicini (Ostfildern: Thorbeke, 2005), pp. 65–69.

[22] Ulrike Bohle and Ekkehard König, 'Zum Begriff des Performativen in der Sprachwissenschaft', in *Theorien des Performativen*, ed. by Erika Fischer-Lichte and Christoph Wulf, Paragrana, 10. 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001) pp. 13–34 (p. 28). Cf. Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in *Performing Feminisms*, ed. by Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 270–82.

[23] John L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); *Theorien des Performativen*, ed. by Fischer-Lichte and Wulf; *Lachgemeinschaften: Kulturelle Inszenierung und soziale Wirkung von Gelächter im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by

performativity to the body which she qualifies as the 'sure guarantor' of the speech act: 'If the promise [as the prototype of speech act and the transcendental principle of communication] relays an intention and the body signifies the unintentional, then the body, which is presupposed by the promise, is also the occasion of the promise's necessary failure.'[24] If Don Juan's victims long for constative language and truth, then Don Juan's performative language is, as Shoshana Felman has it, 'scandalous and potentially comic'[25] — like the performativity of fools.

Whereas previous research had 'focused almost exclusively on the fool's coded body and left aside all that could not be explained semantically or referentially',[26] Werner Röcke and his group have tried to stop looking at the fool as a mere coat stand for symbolic costumes and objects and stress his 'body humour, based on its kinesic logic: acrobatics, mimicking, and variability'.[27] In Rabelais, Bakhtin finds the scandal of performative language embodied in the 'grotesque bodies' of the giants.[28] Not without exaggeration, he describes early modern literature as a sea of grotesque bodies with just some islands of ordinary ones. Rebekka von Mallinckrodt in her 2008 Wolfenbüttel exhibition takes over Marcel Mauss's term and definition of body techniques as 'the ways people in one society or another traditionally make use of their body'.[29] To behave like a fool is to make use of one's body in an unorthodox way, whether or not it leads to the impression of a grotesque body.

This compatibility with theory is not the only advantage of the behavioural approach over the iconographic approach. Another advantage is that it can treat

Werner Röcke and Hans Rudolf Velten, Trends in Medieval Philology, 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

[24] Judith Butler, 'Afterword', in Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin or Seduction in Two Languages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 113–23 (p. 119).

[25] Felman, *Scandal of the Speaking Body*, pp. 13 and 67.

[26] 'fast ausschliesslich den codierten Narrenkörper in den Blick genommen und dass, was sich semantisch oder referentiell nicht erklären liess, beiseite gelassen': Hans-Jürgen Bachorski and others, 'Performativität und Lachkultur in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit', in *Theorien des Performativen*, ed. by Fischer-Lichte and Wulf, pp. 157–90 (p. 179).

[27] 'körperlich bestimmte Komik, die auf seiner Bewegungslogik, seiner Akrobatik, Mimik und Variabilität gründet': Bachorski and others, 'Performativität und Lachkultur', p. 180.

[28] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1984).

[29] Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, *Bewegtes Leben: Körpertechniken in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 2008), p. 3 (Schwarz's translation).

narratives (pictorial or linguistic) more fully. Behaviour, foolish or not, is not only essential to the plot of these narratives, it also allows differentiation — in spaces, situations, characters, and time. From Peter Strohschneider's research we can deduce that medieval foolish behaviour would rather be a kind of ritual in itself, defined, of course, by its difference from and opposition to non-foolish rituals, whereas early modern foolish behaviour would consist of breaking rules and rituals.[30] In this volume, Stefan Bießenecker uses the concept of 'ritual': foolish behaviour can transgress and ridicule rituals, and it can be ritualistic itself.[31] It can even break a fool's ritual. The performance, for example, of a jester at court follows rules, which Eulenspiegel, acting the jester, breaks. So a fool might be either a person acting foolishly, according to rules of acting as a fool, or a person who breaks any ritual, even one destined for fools. But we have evidence that things were even more complicated. At the very end of the age of court jesters, at Frederic II's Prussian court in Potsdam, we witness a merciless struggle for the power to define and to dress the fool and to protect oneself from being treated as a fool.[32]

Our approach allows, indeed may force, us to include both characters that have never been called fools and actions that, by chance or on purpose, have never been labelled as foolish, even if they resemble the actions of real or metaphorical fools. We even have examples that fools can behave like wise people and supposedly wise people like fools. Johannes Pauli, in *Schimpf und Ernst*, his influential collection of funny and serious anecdotes first published in 1522, combines the two when he tells the story of a fools' contest where the winner turns out to be the loser: a nobleman ordered a nice leather marotte to be made for his fool, telling him only to pass on the marotte to someone more foolish than himself. The nobleman became ill, and his doctor told the household that their master would soon be leaving them. The fool ran to the barn to see whether horse and carriage were being prepared for the master's journey. When he saw no signs of preparation he went to the nobleman and asked him about his journey. The nobleman answered that it would be a very long one. The fool gave him the leather marotte because he had obviously not

[30] Peter Strohschneider, 'Situation des Textes: Okkasionelle Bemerkungen zur "New Philology"', *ZfdPh*, 116 (1997), 62–86 (p. 80).

[31] Cf. Christoph Wulf and Jörg Zirfas, 'Die performative Bildung von Gemeinschaften: Zur Hervorbringung des Sozialen in Ritualen und Ritualisierungen', in *Theorien des Performativen*, ed. by Fischer-Lichte and Wulf, pp. 101–27.

[32] Alexander Schwarz, 'La Linguistique du roi et du fou du roi', in *Le Discours sur la langue sous les régimes autoritaires*, ed. by Patrick Sériot and Andrée Tabouret-Keller, Cahiers de l'ILSL, 17 (Lausanne: Institut de linguistique et des sciences du langage, 2004), pp. 219–30.

made any preparations for his journey. The nobleman thought about this 'and made his testament and his soul ready and prepared his journey so that he became a child of eternal bliss. So God had spoken through the fool'.[33]

Everyone can behave like fools, if they dare or if they happen to behave differently from what we expect. Indeed, fools have been named and have named themselves *Chascun*, 'Everybody'.[34] In this term *otherness* becomes universal and so the audience are alienated from their own selves to comic effect, as in the *Sotties*, or to didactic ends, as in *Das Narrenschiff*. But what if no person with strange verbal or non-verbal behaviour were ever labelled metaphorically or *proprie* a fool? Once again, the problem is the solution. We are including in this volume not only fools but also many kinds of different, though not necessarily foolish, behaviour, many types of behaving differently, be it surprisingly stupidly or surprisingly wisely. Even a motionless fool's body invites consideration of its behaviour. The aforementioned Polish court jester Stanczyk in Matejko's *Stanczyk at Queen Bona's Feast* (1861) sits still and melancholically in a corner while, in the background of the painting, the court dances. His behaviour is different from that of everybody else though it is neither noisy nor brutish nor, at a time when the country was in great danger, stupid at all. It is obvious that in times of great self-esteem deviant behaviour would be considered foolish. In times of great self-criticism foolish behaviour would be praised or deviant behaviour called wise: the combination of these two leads to the oxymoron of the wise fool.

There are discussed in this volume a series of fictional and historical characters who behave like fools without being declared fools, neither medically nor by their professional activity. Susanna Niiranen asks why the famous Provençal troubadour Peire Vidal was characterized as a fool. Rosamund Allen uncovers the traces of humour (buried by time) in a seemingly serious text. Guillemette Bolens, Cordula Böcking-Politis, Françoise Le Saux, and Lucy Perry present literary characters who, momentarily or even as a rule, behave like fools without being incorporated into the corresponding iconography. The Tristan matter, discussed in this volume by Patrizia Mazzadi and Neil Thomas, shows that Tristan changed his clothing and his appearance in order not only to avoid recognition but also to benefit from the fool's immunity.

[33] Johannes Pauli, *Schimpf und Ernst*, ed. by Hermann Österley (Stuttgart: Literarischer Verein, 1866), pp. 41–42.

[34] Bolens, 'Les Fous et dissidents de Bakhtine', pp. 206–07.

Behaviour can and must be subdivided, one subdivision being the basic semiotic distinction between verbal and non-verbal behaviour, between voices and gestures. The expectation might be that texts would stress foolish voices and verbal humour while images would highlight foolish gestures and slapstick. While in the *Eulenspiegel* woodcuts, as in modern comic books, this is more or less true, the *Narrenschiff* woodcuts show once more that this is not necessarily so. Not only is the fool's appearance a metaphor, but also the depicted actions widely visualize linguistic metaphors, idioms, and proverbs.[35] It is important furthermore not to see the verbal and non-verbal behaviour as absolutely separate. A popular story that was attributed to different characters, for example Gonella and Hans Clawert, is based on the fool's telling both participants in a future conversation that the other was deaf and that they would have to speak very loudly. We can anticipate the result that intertwines voice and gesture.

Finally, how to recognize foolish behaviour if the narrator or other speaking subjects in the text do not identify it for the reader? When we trace behaviour in this volume, we have to avoid an anachronistic and culturally imperialist way of reading. Foolish behaviour is behaviour that was judged so in the time period we are talking about. If orthodox behaviour defines a culture, then what counts as heterodox behaviour at a given moment and in a given place is part of the definition, even if it gives a timeless impression. But how can we apprehend judgements about behaviour if documents are not explicit and just show, in image or narration, a person behaving in a way that may or may not seem foolish to us? Rosamund Allen discusses this tricky question in detail in her contribution. Foolish behaviour is provocative, provoking an emotional response. Texts will often provide us with the emotional response which informs us that words or acts were deemed foolish.

It is only by rare chance that we get information about the reactions of 'real' audiences to 'real' fool-like behaviour, while in literature and art, according to William Labov's story grammar, any *complicating action*, any foolish behaviour, would be lost and any story incomplete without its *evaluation* and without the *resolution* that responds to it.[36] Those confronted with foolish behaviour, especially those who have been made fools of, may react aggressively. They interpret the foolish

[35] See Bässler, *Sprichwortbild und Sprichwortschwank*.

[36] Labov, 'Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax'. Labov also points at the *orientation* that provides the reader or listener with reasons for the *complicating action* or at least with information about the situation in which and out of which it emerges. The two papers about *Tristan* in this volume deal with this question, Patrizia Mazzadi stressing love and Neil Thomas the *conditio humana* as reasons for Tristan's foolishness.

word or gesture as an infringement of the politeness rule that one should save face,[37] and strike back. Examples are provided in this volume by Susanna Niiranen, Rosamund Allen, and Lucy Perry. But this is not the standard reaction to a fool. According to Peter Burke, fools incite disdain while it is villains who incite hatred (again Lawman's *Brut*, as Allen shows, offers us case histories of this).[38]

However, the typical emotional reaction to foolish behaviour is laughter. Jesters are hired to provide it. Laughter has been defined as a response to bifocalization, that is, a contradiction that can be brought about by the surprising practice of a person.[39] This comic character will in other words be one who behaves like a fool. Laughter in history though presents problems. We cannot be sure that every text that was produced and performed with the aim to provoke laughter actually did so.[40] In the time period we are considering, the social consequences of successful or failed joke-telling could be murderous, as the tragic ending of the *Nibelungenlied* reminds us.[41] Moreover, not all laughter is the same. There is laughing at the fools themselves and laughing at the fools' victims; laughing at people and laughing at things occurring; laughing accidentally and laughing intentionally, inclusively and exclusively, and so on.[42] But here again the hypothesis is that laughter is a reaction to strange behaviour, that is, to people behaving, in the opinion of the laughers, like fools.

Laughter is not only a reaction. Laughter itself is behaviour, behaviour of a particular kind, since it is both vocal behaviour that one can hear and transcribe ('Hahahaha') and non-vocal behaviour that one can watch. It incorporates both voice and gesture. It can be perceived as foolish behaviour itself and as such triggers

[37] Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[38] Peter Burke, *Helden, Schurken und Narren: Europäische Volkskultur in der frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), p. 162.

[39] On bifocalization, cf. Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Pan Books, 1925), p. 35, and Alexander Schwarz in this volume.

[40] Werner Röcke, 'Lizenzen des Witzes: Institutionen und Funktionsweisen der Fazetie im Spätmittelalter', in *Komische Gegenwelten: Lachen und Literatur in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Werner Röcke and Helga Neumann (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999), pp. 79–101 (p. 81).

[41] See Stefan Bießenecker in this volume. Cf. also Schmitz, *Das Hofnarrenwesen der frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 25–26; and *Komik und Sakralität: Aspekte einer ästhetischen Paradoxie in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Anja Grebe and Nikolaus Staubach (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005), about the theological controversies around joke-telling.

[42] Barry Sanders, *Sudden Glory: Laughter as Subversive History* (Boston: Beacon, 1995); *A Cultural History of Humour*, ed. by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenberg (Cambridge: Polity, 1997); Georges Minois, *Histoire du rire et de la dérision* (Paris: Fayard, 2000).

either reactions on a rational, representational, semantic level, in the form of criticism and disdain, or an immediate bodily response, like aggression or more laughter.[43] Both aggressive behaviour and laughter therefore are a reaction and an action, and contagiously recurrent ad infinitum. The subtitle of this volume, 'Voice, Gesture, and Laughter' expresses that these three elements define foolish behaviour in the sense that at least one of them must be present, often two, sometimes three, sometimes inseparably, and sometimes recurrently. The essays that follow show the multitude of facets in the history of the interplay of these elements in medieval and early modern texts. Often one triggering the other, their sum is 'behaving like fools'.

What is new in this book is that foolishness is not contained within tight generic definitions of art. Foolishness is a cultural practice which culminates in the availability of the model fool, through quotation (voice) and imitation (gesture). This available fool is dominant, for example, in the fifteenth-century *Tale of Beryn*, which Guillemette Bolens treats in the opening essay. *The Tale of Beryn* takes its meaning from the framework of a wide culture of texts and genres. Nor is foolishness contained in the figure of the fool. It can be impossible to say why a historical character was called a fool and whether or not it was appropriate. Susanna Niiranen shows how a great troubadour who wished to be integrated in the courtly world was tragically excluded forever because his behaviour was deemed foolish and therefore he was characterized as a fool.

Of course, the question of 'who is the fool?' remains, and intrigues the reader. In *Der Pfaffe Amis*, as demonstrated by Cordula Böcking-Politis, the scheming protagonist brings together two people who finally themselves act out different facets of the role of the fool. Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* and its woodcuts portray the fools as figures of disorder. In her search for the guiding principles of the whole book, the texts, the decoration, and the illustrations, Siegrid Schmidt finds that even the text can be the fool. Sebastian Brant provides examples of foolishness that are shown by the images to be contrived.

Whereas complex tropes and rhetoric are required to uncover the foolishness in society, Alexander Schwarz shows that Eulenspiegel and Nasreddin very simply and easily act the fools and unveil widespread foolery, as well as society's need for nonsense. Three generations after *Eulenspiegel*, the tone has changed dramatically in German *Prosaromanen* about foolish behaviour. The idea is now that of edification, but the result is not secured as narrative never remains within the absolute

[43] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

control of the narrator. The fools' contingency leads, as Peter Glasner claims, to the contingency of texts about fools.

Since we see foolishness as not confined to the figure of the fool, the majority of the contributions deals with texts which have no clear-cut fool figure. In historical narratives, which are treated by the next two papers, foolish behaviour can be a strategic force of the ruler in control, as Wace's *Roman de Rou* bears witness. Françoise Le Saux shows that this is a dangerous game — the play becomes earnest, behaving-like-a-fool can become second nature.

Long historical narratives can have their own humorous elements that provide both light relief as well as serious commentary, as is witnessed in Lawman's *Brut*. 'Humour, of course, is various.'[44] It can have a serious function as reaction or commentary to things that would otherwise go unnoticed. Bringing modern reflections on humour to bear on a serious text, Rosamund Allen observes that the voice of the narrator is in danger of misinterpretation since, with the passage of time or with geographical displacement, humour itself might also go unnoticed. An audience or a reader might not laugh where laughter is the intended response, or indeed they might laugh where it is not. This is not only a problem of space and time but is a general problem of laughter as a cultural phenomenon. Rather than intentional acting, laughter can be a natural, bodily reflex, but its interpretation is always contingent. Laughter has a story that must be told. Stefan Bießenecker undertakes this, revealing in the documents a desire for control that comes from laughter's threat to the self-esteem of persons and institutions.

Not only can persons and institutions be undermined, but literary genre can be open to ridicule through parody. Tanja-Isabel Habicht shows how romances, particularly Arthurian romances, came very early in their literary history to be exposed and their courtly conventions and discourse 'devalued' by the acts and words of dwarfs. This narrative strategy depends on an experienced author as well as on an experienced audience. Habicht uses folly to discuss the dynamics between different genres. Folly may also be used to explore an evolution within one matter. The love of Tristan and Isolde proved inspirational to many European writers over many centuries. The foolishness of Tristan is shown by Patrizia Mazzadi to evolve over time from the hero's use of a pre-existing concept, namely simulating the 'available' fool, to more pessimistic renditions which have him sink into love-sick insanity where he has no control over his behaviour. Mazzadi uses variants of narratives to stage an intertextual 'revenge of folly', where the madness becomes real.

[44] Jane Taylor, 'Introduction', in *Anatomy of Laughter*, ed. by Garfitt, McMorran, and Taylor, pp. 1–10 (p. 8).

In another approach to the Tristan matter, Neil Thomas highlights how the poetic device of the love potion 'deprives [Tristan and Isolde] of their reason'. The device of the potion allows the author to have a depraved, love-stricken, mad hero and heroine, which expresses a pessimistic view of the world, in opposition to the courtly ideal of Arthurian narratives. That so many narratives confront or undermine the conventions of Arthurian romance suggests a widespread anxiety about courtly ideals. One of these Arthurian narratives, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, confronts from within the problematic status of chivalry, in a story that promotes both laughter and fear. The concept of the fool is shown by Lucy Perry to be available to characters and readers, that is, within the narrative and as a response to the text, to enable some conciliatory manoeuvres in an inherently paradoxical and contradictory story.

Once clear-cut sequences of the provocation of laughter through behaving like fools have been identified, similar instances of eccentric behaviour can be registered as instances of *potentially laughter-provoking behaviour* thus allowing an expansion of the corpus without falling into the trap of possibly anachronistic responses of laughter, disgust, or boredom. Thus, the layout of the papers leads the reader from a well-defined starting point to an end that is open, inviting her or him to imagine yet more medieval and early modern fools than we have identified here, and to meditate on whether they really died out in the eighteenth century with the court jesters.[45] Not only are fools everywhere but fool-like behaviour is universally available. The fool embodies paradox, revealing paradox to be the only constant in human affairs. The most appropriate response to this human condition is to defy all idealization through the voices of authors, the gestures of characters, and the laughter of readers.

[45] Wolf Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998); Nick, *Die Hofnarren*.

Traditions of Simulated Folly in *The Canterbury Interlude and Tale of Beryn*

Guillemette Bolens

A fool figure is extant in all parts of *The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn*.[1] While the *Interlude* stages a sot in a fabliau, the *Tale* concerns the frantic foolishness of an anti-heroic Beryn, as well as the simulation of traditional signs of folly by Geoffrey, an expert in law and fiction. The concept of folly and the fool figure are radically transformed in the fifteenth century, when *Beryn* is written. The fool in high medieval literatures predominantly embodied a radical social and spiritual alterity.[2] In contrast, the fool in late medieval and early modern cultural representations appears in groups and, instead of incarnating the Other, becomes Everyman. A sense of universal folly marks such cardinal works as Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* (*Narrenschiff*, 1494) and Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (*Moriae Encomium*, 1511). Fools appear in varied and innumerable cohorts, forcefully invading the social scene.[3] *Beryn* stages types of fools which evince such changes in cultural representations.

[1] 'The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant's Tale of Beryn', in *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions*, ed. by John Bowers, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Insitute Publications, 1992), pp. 55–196. I use this edition throughout the essay. I discuss the literary genealogy of *Beryn*, as well as its critical fortune in Guillemette Bolens, 'Narrative Use and the Practice of Fiction in *The Book of Sindibad* and *The Tale of Beryn*', *Poetics Today*, 29 (2008), 309–51.

[2] See Sylvia Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature: Identities Found and Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[3] See Jean-Marie Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge, XII^e et XIII^e siècles: étude comparée de discours littéraire, médical, juridique et théologique de la folie*, Perspectives Littéraires (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992).

A category of folly typical of the fifteenth century is the clique of sots. Sots are the main protagonists of French plays called *sotties*, central in late medieval and early modern theatre. In the *Canterbury Interlude*, the behaviour of foolish pilgrims arriving in Canterbury evokes that of *sotties* fools. Heather Arden explains that *sotties* are the clearest manifestation of the prevailing significance of folly in the fifteenth century.[4] Folly, illusion, and theatre were incorporated during the fifteenth century in the figure of the sot, whose role was typically performed by members of joyous societies. 'Just as the Fêtes des Fous were dying out, the *sociétés burlesques* [or joyous societies] were developing, and the irreverent, topsyturvy attitudes of the celebrants of the Feast passed to the *sots* of the *sottie*.'[5] The genre of *sotties* is, however, specifically expressive of the fifteenth-century conception of folly as a permanent collective phenomenon rather than a momentary cyclical and ritualized disruption, as is the case with the Feast of Fools. It will lead to Renaissance representations that abound with revelling fools raiding the street, the stage, and all social manifestations.[6] It will also influence English early modern drama, in which the figures of the sot and the fool manifest the impact of French productions.[7]

Before proposing a new reading of *Beryn*'s Pardoner as the epitome of the fifteenth-century sot, I will discuss Geoffrey's simulation of folly in the *Tale*, linking it, in the second section of this essay, to the figure of the *tregetour*. *Tregetour* is a word used in Middle English and medieval French texts to mean 'illusionist'. Geoffrey's skill at making illusions is most visible when he successfully fakes insanity. I will compare the rhetoric of Geoffrey's simulated folly to Tristan's feigned madness in the twelfth-century *Folies Tristan*. According to Jean-Marie Fritz, Tristan represents the most achieved medieval hero type, whose cleverness manifests itself in his capacity to simulate folly.[8] A theatricality typical of the late Middle Ages marks Geoffrey's performance as a natural fool, but the cultural paradigm extant in Tristan's faked madness in the *Folies Tristan* provides an indispensable framework to observe the evolution of folly's style. The *Tale of Beryn* describes the

[4] Heather Arden, *Fools' Plays: A Study of Satire in the 'Sottie'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 3, p. 168.

[5] Arden, *Fools' Plays*, p. 20.

[6] Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, p. 105.

[7] Peter Happé, 'Staging Folly in the Early Sixteenth Century: Heywood, Lindsay, and Others', in *Fools and Folly*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series, 22 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), pp. 73–111.

[8] Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, p. 325.

style of vocal and gestural delivery, the semiotics of disguise, and the rhetoric of irrationality of a protagonist, Geoffrey, whose acting is shown to be effective because it relies on traditional codes. Meanwhile, recurring tropes of transgression and folly, such as a claim to hybrid parturition and to beheading or hanging games, are remoulded and linked to the emergence of a novel literary figure, that of the *player*, who, I will argue, adumbrates the jigging star jester of the early modern stage. In sum, the foolish behaviour of fifteenth-century Geoffrey is linked to both the medieval fool and the early modern jester, thus bridging the two periods and their representations of folly.

A destabilized and destabilizing use of language characterizes the various types of fools in *Beryn*. The foremost feature of the eponymous hero of the *Tale*, Beryn, is the fact that his father deprives him of all education, thus turning him into a madman, a compulsive gambler, incapable of channelling both his physical and verbal violence. In contrast, Geoffrey is knowledgeable and hence capable of playing with language. In this essay, I will focus on Geoffrey, the *tregetour*, and the Pardoner because all three figures bespeak a complex relation to language — verbal language and body language, the latter including kinesic and paralinguistic signals such as gestures and vocalizations.[9] Geoffrey knows how to manipulate the semiotic phenomenon of truth assessment in his audience by skilfully using cultural tropes and behavioural signs of nonsensicality. The correlated problem posed by the *tregetour* is that of verisimilitude and interpretation, connected with the figure of the clerk and his intellectual and possibly manipulative power. Finally, the Pardoner in *Beryn* performs an animal metaphor, he who is connoted in Chaucer's portrait by means of two unsettling animal metaphors, *gelding* and *mare*. I will propose that an enacted metaphor in *Beryn* responds to Chaucer's challenging figures of speech, which, to this day, keep defeating monological readings. My contention is that the central issue raised by *Beryn*'s Pardoner, in response to Chaucer's poetics, is that of the figural. An analysis of Geoffrey, the illusionist, and the Pardoner will lead me to conclude that the function of the fool in some key medieval texts, including *Beryn*, is to perform verbal acts of semantic resistance through a destabilized use of figurality. This playful figurality frees language from its denotative function, thus making the vital game of fiction possible.

In her discussion of the 'anxieties of exchange in *The Tale of Beryn*', Jenny Adams contextualizes *Beryn* in 'the increasingly trade-heavy culture of the

[9] I discuss the question of kinesic intelligence in literary analysis in *Le Style des gestes: corporéité et kinésie dans le récit littéraire* (Lausanne: Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Médecine et de la Santé, 2008). The English translation of this book is forthcoming from Johns Hopkins University Press.

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', when a 'rapid yet uneven growth of commerce' was a source of economic instability.[10] Interestingly, the *Canterbury Interlude* and *Tale of Beryn* map related 'anxieties about exchange through a discourse of gaming as well as through representations of actual games', namely dice and chess.[11] Adams highlights the way in which both the *Interlude* and the *Tale* use 'a language of games' to 'describe a trade gone sour'.[12] Even though she usefully stresses the significance of games in *Beryn*, Adams does not discuss the most unsettling instances of gaming in the text, such as Geoffrey's fictitious hanging game. What is more, she puts so much emphasis on the anxieties of exchange that she downplays the pervading humour and *playfulness* of the narrative. It is notable, in this respect, that she describes Geoffrey solely as 'a sage old man whose manipulation of the court cases both saves Beryn from jail and doubles Beryn's fortune'.[13] This description is biased if we do not acknowledge the fact that Geoffrey saves Beryn *because* he is capable of behaving like a fool, verbally, vocally, and gesturally. He qualifies as a sage insofar as his wisdom manifests itself through carefully manoeuvred signs of folly and foolishness, which are effectual when they succeed in triggering laughter in his audience. My purpose in this essay is thus to grapple with a sense of polyvocal and polymorphic folly in *Beryn*, which bears witness — notwithstanding the anxieties of commerce — to the vital role nonsensicality, fictionality, and a humorously destabilizing use of figurality played in late medieval literature.

The Simulating Fool and his Rhetoric of Nonsensicality

Folly in *Beryn* evinces the historical and cultural reality of Middle English literature. 'Anglo-French still dominated the royal court of Edward III [...], and apparently later too; and it was French and Anglo-French literature that carried all the cultural capital.'[14] In the fifteenth century, when *Beryn* is written, the cultural,

[10] Jenny Adams, 'Exchequers and Balances: Anxieties of Exchange in *The Tale of Beryn*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 25 (2004), 267–97 (pp. 268–69).

[11] Adams, 'Exchequers and Balances', p. 269.

[12] Adams, 'Exchequers and Balances', p. 270.

[13] Adams, 'Exchequers and Balances', pp. 295–96. I discuss Beryn's trial and Geoffrey's judicial intervention in Bolens, 'Narrative Use'.

[14] Helen Cooper, 'I. Chaucerian Representation; II. Chaucerian Poetics', in *New Readings of Chaucer's Poetry*, ed. by Robert G. Benson and Susan J. Ridyard (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), pp. 7–50 (p. 31).

literary, and political status of English is undergoing considerable changes, but the influence of French literature remains significant.[15] *Beryn* is evidence of this fact, as, on the one hand, it is an adaptation of the first part of the French prose romance *Berinus*, composed between 1350 and 1370,[16] and, on the other, the influence not only of French fabliaux but also of French *sotties* is perceptible in the *Interlude*. Concerning the two extant versions of the *Folies Tristan*, it is notable that the Berne version is written in Norman and the Oxford version in Anglo-Norman: French was used on both sides of the Channel to tell the same story. This story was still part of the cultural capital of the authors of both the fourteenth-century French *Berinus* and the fifteenth-century English *Beryn*.

London, British Library, MS Harley 2253 also testifies to the historical proximity, rather, inextricability, of French and Middle English literary traditions.[17] This remarkable mid-fourteenth-century Herefordshire manuscript contains some French fabliaux next to Middle English lyrics. One of the French fabliaux, entitled *Le Roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ely* (fols 107^{v}–109^{v}), is a dialogue in French between a jongleur and the King of England.[18] Howard Bloch convincingly argues that language is often the central target of fabliaux. *Le Roi d'Angleterre* in particular raises the question of language over and over again: 'Given that the jongleur can never adequately name himself, how does he go about naming that impossibility?'[19] As will become apparent, playing with the impossibility of denoting and naming is at the core of the rhetoric of folly in a number of medieval texts, ranging from Geoffrey of Monmouth's prophecies of Merlin to sixteenth-century *sotties*. These various texts evince a common stance vis-à-vis language, playing with the limits of referentiality and denotation.

[15] See John Burrow, 'Hoccleve and the Middle French Poets', in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 35–50.

[16] *Bérinus: roman en prose du XIV^{e} siècle*, ed. by Robert Bossuat, 2 vols (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1931–33).

[17] Erik Hertog, *Chaucer's Fabliaux as Analogues* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991), p. 7; Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry*, Routledge History of English Poetry, 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 120.

[18] *Le Roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ely*, in *Recueil Général et complet des Fabliaux des XIII^{e} et XIV^{e} siècles*, ed. by Anatole de Montaiglon and Gaston Raynaud, 6 vols (Paris: Librarie des Bibliophiles, 1872–90; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1973), II, 242–56. It corresponds to number 126 in Per Nykrog's classification of fabliaux, in *Les Fabliaux* (Geneva: Droz, 1973).

[19] Howard R. Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 19.

A telling example is a passage in *La Sottie du Roy des Sotz* (*c.* 1545), where the King of Sots and three other sots, Triboulet, Coquibus, and Sottinet, vainly try to make Guippelin speak:

TRIBOULET[20]
Il cloche devant les boyteux
Et faict le sot devant les sotz.
Guippelin, responds moy deux motz.
Dy moy, pourquoy ne parles tu?

SOTTINET
Il craint ainsi d'estre battu.

COQUIBUS
Non faict; mais il a le lempas.[21]

LE ROY DES SOTZ
Non a, vrayement; il ne l'a pas;
Tu scès bien qu'il n'est pas cheval.

SOTTINET
Il a doncques quelque aultre mal.
A il point le panthagruel?[22]

LE ROY DES SOTZ
On ne l'a jamais si cruel
Qu'il garde de parler aux gens.

TRIBOULET
He limps in front of the lame
And acts like a sot in front of the sot.
Guippelin, answer me in two words
Tell me, why don't you speak?

SOTTINET
He fears to be beaten.

COQUIBUS
Not at all; he's got the *lempas*.

THE KING OF SOTS
Of course not, really; he doesn't have it;
You know well that he is not a horse.

SOTTINET
Then he has some other illness.
Does he not have the *panthagruel*?

THE KING OF SOTS
No one has it so severely
That it prevents people from speaking.

[20] Triboulet is the name of the historical and renowned fool of Louis XII and François I. François Rabelais gives this name to the fool that Pantagruel and Panurge summon in *Tiers Livre*, chap. 38 (François Rabelais, 'Tiers Livre', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Mireille Huchon and François Moreau (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 339–513). See Maurice Lever, *Le Sceptre et la marotte: histoire des fous de cour* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), pp. 184–97; and Daniel Ménager, *Rabelais en toutes lettres* (Paris: Bordas, 1989), pp. 84–87.

[21] *Lempas*, a mouth disease affecting horses.

[22] The use of pantagruel as a noun points towards a popular motif famously developed by François Rabelais, who maintains the association between his hero, Pantagruel, and thirst. In *Pantagruel* I, chap. 2, 'De la nativité du très redouté Pantagruel', Pantagruel's birth takes place during a thirty-six-month drought which makes the earth sweat brine instead of dew. The baby comes out of his mother's womb preceded by a procession of mounts carrying salted food ('jambons, langue de boeuf fumées, anguillettes, etc.'). The narrator explains that Gargantua names his son *Pantagruel*, for PANTA means *all* in Greek and GRUEL means *thirsty* ('altérés') in Arabic. Pantagruel will dominate the drunkards and salt eaters, whose thirst can never be quenched, who are never 'dés-altérés'. François Rabelais, 'Pantagruel', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Huchon and Moreau, pp. 209–337.

TRIBOULET Il pourroit bien avoir les dens De la gorge toute verrie.	TRIBOULET He may have the teeth Of the throat all brittle.
LE ROY DES SOTZ Tu le dis affin que je rie.	THE KING OF SOTS You say that to make me laugh.
SOTTINET Quoy doncques? a il l'esquinance.[23]	SOTTINET What then? Does he have the *esquinance*.
MITTOUFLET Par Nostre Dame! je le pense, Car il beut hyer mon hypocras.[24]	MITTOUFLET By our Lady! I think so, Because he drank my *hypocras* yesterday.
LE ROY DES SOTZ Mais il a le gousier tout gras Encore de caresme prenant. (lines 201–20)[25]	THE KING OF SOTS But his gullet is still greasy From his pre-Lent feasting.

Guippelin is a chameleon-like fool who mimetically mirrors the persons near him. It will appear that the emergence of language is impeded in him by an allegorical net wrought by youth and poverty (lines 243–56). Meanwhile, the debate between the other sots revolves around ludicrous and laughable explanations for the hindrance of speech (*You say that to make me laugh*), which are all based on stark physicality: unquenchable thirst, weak teeth, and a greasy throat from excess of food during Mardi Gras. The dialogue is triggered by silence, and the sots' multifarious and extravagant explanations for speech deprivation bespeak the fundamental impossibility of accounting for language itself. In the lineage of *Le Roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ely*, *sotties* address the question of fabliaux according to Bloch, that is: given that we can never adequately name, how do we go about naming that impossibility? The rhetoric of folly juggles with this impossibility, performing and carnivalizing it through verbal, vocal, and gestural excess and a declared nonsensicality.

Folly in medieval literature has been associated with the impossibility of accounting for language, as well as with the limits of the denotative power of language. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a madman such as Merlin possesses a

[23] *E(s)quinance*, a throat disease.

[24] *Hypocras*, a drink made of wine mixed with sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves.

[25] *La Sottie Nouvelle du Roy des Sotz*, in *Recueil Général des Sotties*, ed. by Emile Picot, 3 vols (Paris: Firmin-Didot & Cie, 1902; repr. 1968), III, 205–31 (pp. 222–23). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

prophetical power and an access to other realms of reality.[26] The discourse of the fool possibly expresses superior, even supernatural, knowledge. Typically, Merlin's prophecies in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* articulate a type of wisdom inaccessible to everyman. The text conveys this idea by progressively defeating the readability of the prophecies, thus frustrating all efforts to translate Merlin's words into meaningful messages. For example, one section in the prophecies explains that 'an ass will call upon a long-bearded ram and will take his shape; the mountain ox will feel indignant; after calling upon the wolf, he will transfix the ass and the ram with his horn. After indulging in cruelty, he will devour their flesh and bones but he will be cremated on Mount Urien'.[27] These images call to mind cryptic biblical passages, such as Daniel's vision.[28] In contrast, however, Daniel's vision is ultimately explained in the Bible. Such is not the case with Merlin's prophecies, which remain impossible to translate into cogent denotations.

Thus, Geoffrey of Monmouth uses the prophetic genre to achieve conflicting semantic effects. It is a given of the genre that prophecies must be understood symbolically; usually the reader is called to translate them into an intelligible, literal content, and Merlin's prophecies do begin with relatively decipherable references.

[26] On this question, see Howard R. Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); J. F. Nagy, 'The Wisdom of the Geilt', *Eigse*, 19 (1982), 44–60; Jan Ziolkowski, 'The Nature of Prophecy in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*', in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of Literary Tradition*, ed. by James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 151–245.

[27] 'Uocabit asinus hyrcum prolixe barbe et formam ipsius mutuabit. Indigabitur igitur montanus uocatoque lupo, cornu taurus in ipsos figet. Ut autem sevitie indulserit, deuorabit carnes eorum et ossa sed in cacumine Uriani cremabitur': *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, vol. I: *Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568*, ed. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: Brewer, 1984), §116: 47 (pp. 80–81). Geoffrey wrote Merlin's prophecies in 1134 and included them in his *Historia regum Britanniae* in 1138.

[28] Daniel's vision reads: 'And I lifted up my eyes and saw: and, behold, a ram stood before the water, having two high horns, and one higher than the other and growing up' (Daniel 8. 3). 'And I understood: and, behold, a he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and he touched not the ground: and the he-goat had a notable horn between his eyes' (Daniel 8. 5). The rams met in combat, and the second cast the first on the ground; 'he stamped upon him. [...] And the he-goat became exceeding great. And when he was grown the great horn was broken: and there came up four horns under it towards the four winds of heaven' (Daniel 8. 7–8). The vision continues until Daniel hears a voice say: 'Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision' (Daniel 8. 16), and it is explained to Daniel that the ram is the king of the Medes and Persians and the he-goat the king of the Greeks. The four horns are to say that 'four kings shall rise up of his [the Greek king's] nation, but not with his strength' (Daniel 8. 18–22, Douay Bible).

But the prophecies soon launch into a series of metaphors that defy all interpretation. The flamboyant and comical extravagance of the passage that follows the cremation of the ox illustrates this fact:

> Fauille rogi mutabuntur in cignos, qui in sicco quasi in flumine natabunt. Deuorabunt pisces in piscibus et homines in hominibus deglutient. Superueniente uero senectute, efficientur submarini duces atque submarinas insidias machinabuntur. Summergent naualia et argentum non minimum congregabunt. (*Historia regum Britanniae*, §116: 48)
>
> [The pyre's ashes will transform into swans, which will swim on an almost-dry river. They will swallow fish after fish and engulf man after man. While growing old, they will dominate the bottom of the seas and will scheme underwater ambushes. They will submerge ships and gather up an appreciable amount of silver.]

While opacity is to be expected in prophecies, the text's extreme treatment of Merlin's discourse plays with the reader's desire for meaning. Geoffrey of Monmouth confronts his reader with the impossibility of interpreting Merlin's words, by means of such humorous images as that of anthropophagous swans scheming ambushes and pirating ships. Such a programmatically defeated, *qua* nonsensical, referentiality is characteristic of the rhetoric of folly throughout medieval literature, be the madman a bewildered prophet like Merlin or a cunning jester like the Jongleur d'Ely.

The *Roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ely* expresses semantic preoccupations when the main protagonist questions the principle of referentiality and disturbs the expectations of linguistic cogency assumed by his interlocutor, the King of England. The Jongleur is the epistemological descendant of a Merlin. Although one is a prophet and the other a jongleur, both are fools. Fritz and Philippe Ménard insist that a distinction between the truly bewildered man and the court fool must not be overstressed.[29] Behaving like a madman was a prominent part of a jongleur's repertoire, whence his label of fool,[30] and the medieval language of folly is most clearly articulated when folly is simulated, verbally, vocally, and gesturally. Imitation enhances the salient features of the literary and cultural figure of the fool. Geoffrey in *Beryn* continues this tradition but as a fifteenth-century reveller. His rhetoric of insanity is based on traditional tropes, which are adapted to a physical and behavioural disguise typical of folly's new style.

[29] Philippe Ménard, 'Les Fous dans la société médiévale', *Romania*, 98 (1977), 433–59 (p. 453); Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, p. 29.

[30] Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, p. 329.

The court fool is an entertainer and may be a minstrel or a jongleur. The role he enacts is often used as a source of impunity. In Wace's *Roman de Brut* (1155), the kinship between harper, jongleur, and fool is made explicit.[31] In order to enter the fortress of Everwic (York), held by his brother Colgrim and besieged by Arthur, Baldulf disguises himself as a jongleur, hanging a harp around his neck, and shaving half his head, mustache, and beard, 'Bien sembla lecheür u fol' (line 9109; he looked much like a lecher or fool).[32] A shaved head constitutes a privileged sign in the semiotics of folly. As the story of Baldulf shows, folly can be used as a disguise, and its most blatant physical expression is a foolish shaving, in this instance of half the head and face. One way to denote a mask in medieval French was by the phrase 'fol visage' (mad face).[33] When blended with the fool figure, the minstrel, harper, or jongleur is protected by his assumed role. Baldulf, once seen as a fool, has no difficulty entering the fortress. The immunity conferred by the simulation of folly can be used to violent ends, whether rhetorical or physical.[34] The violence is physical in the case of Baldulf. It is both physical and rhetorical in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as well as in its literary forerunner, Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*, where Amleth's faked folly enables the latter to murder his uncle.[35] Folly as a mask proves particularly relevant in a study of Geoffrey's simulated madness in *Berinus* and *Beryn*.

> Hanybald loked on Geoffrey as he were amased,
> And beheld his contenaunce and howe he was i-rased [shaved],
> But evermore he thought that he was a fole,
> Naturell of kynde, and had noon other tool,
> As semed by his wordes and his visage both,
> And thought it had been foly to wex with hym wroth. (*Beryn*, lines 2933–38)

Folly confers immunity, for one would be mad to be upset by a fool's nonsensical chatter, countenance, and facial expressions.

[31] Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, p. 329.

[32] Wace, *Le Roman de Brut*, ed. by Ivor Arnold (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1940).

[33] Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, p. 328.

[34] Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, p. 325.

[35] Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, book 3, chap. 6 (written between 1210 and 1220). See H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'Loki and Saxo's Hamlet', in *The Fool and the Trickster: Studies in Honour of Enid Welsford*, ed. by Paul V. A. Williams (Cambridge: Brewer; Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), pp. 3–17. Significantly, *Amleth* in Swedish means 'the idiot' (*amlódi*) (Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge*, p. 324).

Thus, a clear physical token of folly in medieval texts is a head shorn crudely. The gesture to shear a man's head roughly — not in a tonsure — turns the latter almost automatically into the representation of a fool. In the *Folies Tristan*, the hero, in order to appear a fool, cuts his hair with a pair of scissors Queen Yseult once offered him. This disguise gives him access to King Mark's forbidden castle and thus to Yseult. Tristan fulfils the Queen's expectation implied in her gift: he must be willing to shave his head like a fool and thus forsake all sense of pride and knightly honour in the name of their mutual passion.[36] In the Oxford *Folie*, Tristan shears his hair 'en croiz'.[37] Jacqueline Schaefer explains that the 'ambiguity of the phrase has led the editors of the Oxford *Folie*, Bédier and later Hoepffner, to imagine the former a tonsure in the shape of a cross, the latter a haircut shaped so as to leave two hairlines crossing one another'.[38] But she argues that

> The phrase [...] was a fixed one, with equivalents in other languages, not an invention of the author of [the Oxford *Folie*]. Also, far from referring to the precise pattern of the cross, which might lead to a symbolic interpretation, it refers to the absence of pattern, a haphazard crossing of the scissors, nicking here and there. The Spanish equivalent, 'Trasquilar a cruces', was in common usage and meant cutting the hair without order, irregularly and crudely as was the custom for fools and other social outcasts.[39]

[36] See Jacqueline T. Schaefer, 'Specularity in the Medieval *Folie Tristan* Poems or Madness as Metadiscourse', *Neophilologus*, 77 (1993), 355–68. In *Le Tristan en prose* (*c.* 1240), used by Thomas Malory in his *Book of Tristram de Lyones* (1470), Tristan is genuinely mad and his shaving is inflicted upon him by shepherds, who humiliate and molest him daily: 'Et la cose ki plus laidement le desfigura si fu que li pastour le tondirent et k'i li taignoient le vis cascun jour u d'une coulour u d'autre' (And the thing that disfigured him most badly was that the shepherds sheared him and that they stained his face every day with one colour or another), *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, ed. by Philippe Ménard (Geneva: Droz, 1987), I. xii, p. 248, lines 29–31. Malory's version reads thus: 'And so they [herdemen and shyperdis] clypped hym with sherys and made hym lyke a foole', *Malory: Works*, ed. by Eugène Vinaver, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 305, lines 14–15.

[37] 'Enaprés se tundi en croiz': Oxford *Folie Tristan*, line 211. I quote from Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Ian Short's revised edition of Félix Lecoy's edition, *Le 'Roman de Tristan' par Thomas suivi de 'La Folie Tristan' de Berne et 'La Folie Tristan' d'Oxford* (Paris: Champion, 2003).

[38] Jacqueline Schaefer, 'Tristan's Folly: Feigned or Real?', *Tristania*, 3 (1977) 3–16 (pp. 4–5).

[39] Schaefer, 'Tristan's Folly', p. 5. Schaefer is assuredly right to insist that the shape of a cross is not implied in the fool's haircut. However, the expression 'en croix' occasionally suggested to some authors that the 'cross/ing' qualified the shape of the haircut rather than the shaver's gestures — witness the anonymous *Kyng Robert of Cicyle*, composed at the end of the fourteenth century in a south-east Midlands dialect: 'He heet a barbur him bifore, | That as a fool he schulde be shore | Al around, lich a frere, | An honed-brede boue either ere, | And on his croune make a crois' (lines

In *Berinus*, Geoffrey is shorn 'en croix' (§95) and in *Beryn*, the operation is performed in haste and with crude instruments ('lewd tole', line 2917), which suggests the same type of rough shearing.[40] Geoffrey's new look is sufficient to turn him into the epitome of the fool ('There was no man alyve bet like to a fole', line 2918). Whilst the shaving of all hair could conceivably be seen as revelatory of facial features and therefore of the person's identity, a shorn head is a sign of such a strong and widely understood significance that it functions as a mask, veiling in fact the person's identity.

After cutting his hair, Tristan pulls out a pole from a hedge, or finds a club, and makes it hang from his neck.[41] The pole and the club are other traditional signs of folly. They link the fool with the figure of the wild man. With them Tristan behaves like a lunatic and strikes whoever comes near. In contrast to Tristan's wild rage, Geoffrey's madness is that of a late medieval fool, that of a reveller acting like a sot. His behaviour is immediately interpreted as folly because he gambols and twirls, he speaks with a high-pitched voice and an idiotic expression (lines 2930–32). Eccentric behaviour within the general grammar of folly remains topical, but the style of eccentricity has been refashioned:

> The Romeyns went to barr, and Geoffrey al tofore
> With a nyce contenaunce, bare-fote and totore,
> Pleying with a yerd he bare in his honde
> And was ever wistlyng att every pase comand.
> The steward and the burgeyses had game inowghe
> Of Geoffreyes nyce comyng, and hertlich lowghe,
> And eche man seyd, 'Gilhochet, come nere.' (*Beryn*, lines 3413–19)

169–73). See Martin W. Walsh, 'The King his Own Fool: *Robert of Cicyle*', in *Fools and Folly*, ed. by Davidson, pp. 34–46 (pp. 34–35). The edition used by Walsh is *Middle English Metrical Romances*, ed. by Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale, 2 vols (New York: Prentice Hall, 1930; repr. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), II, 933–46.

[40] In La3amon's *Brut* (London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A IX), the phrase 'to crosse' is used to explain that Baldulf shears his head so as to look like a fool (line 20307) (*Layamons Brut or Chronicle of Britain: A Poetical Semi-Saxon Paraphrase of The Brut of Wace*, ed. by Sir Frederic Madden, 3 vols (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1847; repr. Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1967), II, 428, line 20). In his glossary (vol. III), Madden translates *crosce*, *crosse* by 'fool' with a question mark. W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg translate 'makede hine to crosse' by 'made himself seem a half-wit' (*Layamon's Arthur: The Arthurian Section of Layamon's 'Brut'*, ed. and trans. by W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), line 10132). I propose that the phrase 'to crosse' in La3amon corresponds to the French 'en croix' and the Spanish 'a cruces'.

[41] 'un pel': Oxford *Folie Tristan*, line 222; 'une maçue': Berne *Folie Tristan*, line 134.

Geoffrey walks barefoot, his clothes are torn, and he carries a *yard*, 'rod, staff'. So far, the portrait could fit an unkempt Tristan. Geoffrey's rod, however, is a late medieval version of the wild man's weapon. Instead of waving a club to strike, the fool plays with a staff and flourishes it while hopping and whistling. The tokens of madness have been reinterpreted. The wild man is now a jester, the fool a player, who deliberately triggers a general 'hertlich' laughter.

Geoffrey's pseudonym is Gilhochet. The French *Berinus* has 'Guinehochet' (§§ 91, 101). This name is extant in the thirteenth-century *Parisiana Poetria*, in which John of Garland expounds upon the nature of comedy.[42] Garland chooses to illustrate the genre of comedy with a story depicting a spirit hidden in a well in France. The author first gives a professedly mediocre example, followed by an improved version. In the first case, Guinehochet is a 'Spiritus malignus in partibus Gallie cuidam se immisit sisterne' (lines 422–23; 'An evil spirit settled in a certain well in a part of France'). In the second version Guinehochet is introduced thus:

> Est ex Plutonis fovea prolata colonis Gallica vox, leta, iocunda, novella, faceta:
> 'Hac in cisterna lateo, terreque caverna
> Hospitor et ludo; ventura latencia nudo.
> Ginnehocher Baratri me vulgus nominat Atri.' (Garland, lines 433–36)
>
> [From Pluto's pit to the farmers comes a French voice, fun-loving, full of jokes, novel, witty: 'I hide in this well, I sojourn in this hole in the earth, and I play; I lay bare the hidden future. The mob calls me Guinehochet of Black Hell.']

The learned reference to the classical god Pluto leads away from an indefinite 'evil spirit' and towards a refreshing French voice. Garland's Guinehochet is metamorphosed on the spot, for pedagogical purposes, from a malevolent spirit into a merry voice in the vein of future French *sotties* fools. Fear and spectrality are turned into tricks and jokes. The voice coming from the well is novel. It is not threatening: it is joyful, facetious, and witty. Guinehochet says he is playing, *ludo*; he is *leta*, fun-loving. Similarly, Geoffrey, while relying on traditional signs of folly, is not frenetic and enraged: he cavorts and frolics. For folly as frenzy has been replaced by folly as revelry.

[42] John of Garland, *The 'Parisiana Poetria' of John of Garland*, ed. and trans. by Traugott Lawler (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). John of Garland was an Englishman who taught grammar and literature at the University of Paris during the first half of the thirteenth century. The point of Garland's demonstration is that the level of style must fit the matter, e.g. high style for high sentiments and low style for comedies — 'provided that in treating a low subject we be not too lackluster and unfigurative, confusing that style with inarticulateness' (lines 416–21; all translations of Garland are Lawler's).

The *Canterbury Interlude* opens with a comparison between the Canterbury pilgrims and Hurlewayne's *mesnie*. Hurlewayne is the Hellequin of Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de la Feuillée* (1276), one of the earliest achievements of French secular theatre and the first medieval play to give a voice to folly in the person of a *dervé*.[43] According to Ginzburg, the Hellequin *mesnie* originally personified the throng of the dead restlessly roaming about the earth.[44] The cultural significance of the legend was progressively transformed into a dramatized folly, of which disruptive drive became urbanized. Instead of evoking the presence of the dead, the manifestation came to satirize the society of the living in scenes played through city streets, leading to the early modern stage and the commedia dell'arte in particular. The disruptive Hellequin was transmogrified on stage into the comic type Harlequin, whose traditional black mask was a residue of his original link with the world of the dead.[45] As in Garland, spectrality was progressively replaced by comedy. The fact that the *Canterbury Interlude* begins with a comparison between the troop of pilgrims and Hellequin's company indicates that *Beryn* ought to be appraised within this larger network of associations.

To return to Tristan, it is interesting that he should darken his face by means of an herb.[46] Evocative of Harlequin's black mask, Tristan's dark face and disguise are entirely successful. Nobody recognizes him, not even Yseult, who says she would love a noble and handsome man, but certainly not a fat, hideous, and ugly fool.[47] In *Beryn*, the Steward feels equally secure that he is dealing with a fool, and thus fails to identify Geoffrey (lines 3257–62). Geoffrey used to hide his true identity by faking lameness. He now replaces his former disguise with the new one, and his shorn head and foolish gait are enough to veil his former identity.

[43] Also spelled *desvé*, *desvez*. A synonym is *forsenez*. The *derverie* or *desverie* is a folly which partakes of mental torment, furor, and frenzy.

[44] Carlo Ginzburg, 'Charivari, associations juvéniles, chasse sauvage', in *Le Charivari*, ed. by Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris: La Haye; New York: Mouton, 1981), pp. 131–40 (p. 135).

[45] See Gaston Raynaud, '1) La Mesnie Hellequin, 2) Le poème perdu du Comte Ernequin, 3) Quelques mots sur Arlequin', in *Études Romanes dédiées à Gaston Paris, édité par ses élèves français et ses élèves étrangers des pays de langue française* (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1891; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1976), pp. 51–68 (pp. 64–68); Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 32; Anne Lombard-Jourdan, *Aux Origines de Carnaval* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005), p. 212.

[46] 'Puis ennerci, muad culur': Oxford *Folie Tristan*, lines 212–16.

[47] 'E tu es gros, hidus et laiz': Oxford *Folie Tristan*, line 369.

While a shorn head and an eccentric body language serve as tokens of Geoffrey's madness, the mask of folly is further authenticated by a correlated discourse typical of a fool. Traditional dialogues between a fool and a wise man often concern genealogies and origins — witness Salomon and Marcolphus's contest of wit. Marcolphus replies to Salomon's lengthy and prestigious genealogy by bluntly stating: 'Et ego sum Marcolphus Follus' (And I am Marcolphus the Fool).[48] Similarly, in the *Roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ely*, the king asks the jongleur about his origins.

> — Responez à droit, daunz Joglours;
> De quele terre estez vus?
> — Sire, estez vus tywlers ou potters
> Qe si folement demaundez?
> Purquoi demandez de quele tere?
> Volez vus de moi potz fere? (*Le Roi d'Angleterre*, p. 247)
>
> [— Answer me straight, don Juggler;
> From which land (*terre*) are you?
> — Sire, are you a tile-maker or a potter
> That you ask such a foolish question?
> Why ask from which clay (*terre*)?
> Do you want to make a pot out of me?]

The fool plays with the double meaning of *terre* in French ('land' and 'clay'), insinuating that the king might foolishly be inclined to make a clay pot out of him. In the same way, both Tristan and Geoffrey are questioned on their origins and identity. The answers lead to a contest of wits between the pseudo-fool and the figure of authority, a recurring element in the tradition of feigned folly. In the *Folies Tristan*, the hero speaks with King Mark; in *Beryn*, Geoffrey converses with the local Steward.

In the *Tale of Beryn* we find three main dialogues between Geoffrey and Hanybald besides the trial of Beryn, during which Geoffrey pleads successfully. In the first, Geoffrey states that he is the progenitor of his interlocutors. In the second, Hanybald tests Geoffrey's knowledge of the sailor's craft.[49] The third is an exchange on Geoffrey's origin and identity:

[48] Barbara Swain, *Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), pp. 32–33. In Lydgate, 'The Order of Fools', Markolff is the 'foundour, patroun, & president' of the Order of Fools (line 5), in *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, vol. II: *Secular Poems*, ed. by Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS, o.s., 192 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934; repr. 1961), pp. 449–55 (p. 449).

[49] This passage calls to mind Tristan in the Oxford *Folie* proving his expertise as a hunter and angler, 'launching in the description of his totally absurd technique': Schaefer, 'Tristan's Folly', pp. 8–9.

> But yit he [Hanybald] axed of Geoffrey, 'What is thy name, I prey?'
> 'Gilhochet,' quod Geoffrey, 'men cleped me yisterday.'
> 'And where weer thow i-bore?' — 'I note, I make avowe,'
> Seyd Geoffrey to this Hanybald; 'I axe that of yewe,
> For I can tell no more but here I stond nowe.' (*Beryn*, lines 3045–49)

Geoffrey's origins are summed up by his sheer presence here and now. Geoffrey's stance evokes Marcolphus's blunt statement. The fool simply exists, standing here and now, unanchored to a genealogy traceable through memorized names.

Another important trope in the rhetoric of folly is hybridity. In response to King Mark's questions, Tristan refers to animal origins:

> Mars l'apele si li demande:
> 'Fous, con as non? — G'é non Picous.[50]
> — Qui t'angendra? — Uns galerous.
> — De que t'ot il? — D'une balaine. (Berne *Folie Tristan*, lines 155–58)
>
> [Mark called him and asked:
> 'Fool, what is your name? — My name is Picous.
> — Who engendered you? — A walrus.
> — With whom? — A whale.]

Hybrid origins also appear in *Berinus* and *Beryn* when Geoffrey explains to armed men ready to capture him that in fact he himself fathered them the day before with — as will later appear — a mouse. Despite a notable contrast in size with Tristan's maternal whale, hybridity is a central feature in both cases.

> 'Where art thow now, Beryn? Com nere, behold and se!
> Here is an huge pepill i-rayed and i-dight.
> All these been my children that been in armes bryghte,
> Yisterday I gate hem! Is nat mervaill
> That they been hider i-com to be of our counsaill
> And to stond by us and help us in our plé?
> Al myne own children, blessed mut ye be!'
> Quod Geoffrey with an high voise, and had a nyce visage,
> And gan to daunce for joy in the forestage. (*Beryn*, lines 2924–32)

Geoffrey's high voice, silly expression, and foolish dancing substantiate a rhetoric of madness that interconnects traditional motifs, already extant in the *Folies Tristan*, with a new sense of theatricality. Here Geoffrey uses the ship's forecastle as a stage for his antics. Later, he will perform a histrionic number after climbing upon a platform in order to be seen by everyone (lines 3077–80).

[50] See J. M. Telfer, 'Picous (*Folie Tristan de Berne*, line 156)', *French Studies*, 5 (1951), 56–61.

Several elements in Geoffrey's speech call to mind traditional motifs. Geoffrey fathered the audience threatening him. This idea evokes the nonsense images of the Revesby Mummers' Play, in which a fool is father to the group of men that is about to behead him.[51] A beheading game is the climax of the majority of Mummers' plays and is central to the fourteenth-century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. A similar game, this time by hanging, as for Geoffrey, is alluded to in the fifteenth-century *Mankind*, when New Guise enters with a severed halter around his neck: 'I was twychyde by the neke; the game was begunne' (line 616).[52] A mock beheading in another scene suggests a close connection with folk games.[53]

After Mankind has driven off New Guise, Nowadays, and Nought by hitting and injuring them with his spade, there is a comic scene in which Mischief acts as a parody of the consoling mother towards the three crying babes and goes through a comic mime, which historians of drama have suggested was taken over from traditional Mummers' plays, of supposedly chopping off Nowadays's head and restoring it whole.[54]

In *Beryn*, Geoffrey explains that the begetting of the citizens took place while he was hanging by the neck during a game:

> 'Yisterday,' quod Geoffrey, 'pleying in the strete
> Atte gentill game that cleped is the quek,
> A long peny-halter was cast about my nekk
> And i-knet fast with a ryding knot
> And cast over a perche and haled along my throte.'
> 'Was that a game,' quod Hanybald, 'for to hang thyself?'
> 'So they seyd about me, a thousand ech by hymselff.'

[51] 'The Revesby Play', in E. K. Chambers, *The English Folk-Play* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 104–20 (p. 112). On Mummer's plays, see Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Alan Brody, *The English Mummers and their Plays: Traces of Ancient Mystery* (London: Routledge, 1969; repr. 1970).

[52] *Mankind*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 258–79.

[53] Walter K. Smart, 'Mankind and the Mumming Plays', *Modern Language Notes*, 32 (1917), 21–25; Sandra Billington, '"Suffer Fools Gladly": The Fool in Medieval England and the Play *Mankind*', in *The Fool and the Trickster*, ed. by Williams, pp. 36–54 (p. 46).

[54] W. A. Davenport, *Fifteenth-Century English Drama: The Early Moral Plays and their Literary Relations* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1982; Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), p. 44. See also William Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre 1400–1500* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 45.

> 'How scapeddest thow,' quod Hanybald, 'that thow were nat dede?'
> 'Thereto can I answere without eny rede.
> I bare thre dise in myne own purs,
> For I go never without, fare I better or wors.
> I kist hem forth al thre and too fil amys-ase.
> But here now what fill after, right a mervolouse case!
> There cam a mows lepe forth and ete the third boon,
> That puffed out hir skyn as grete as she myght goon,
> And in this maner wise, of the mouse and me,
> All ye be i-com my children fair and fre.' (*Beryn*, line 2942–58)

The mother is a mouse, which ate one of the three dice Geoffrey cast while being hanged by the neck. Thus inseminated, the animal swelled up, puffed out its skin to its limits, and in this fashion gave birth to their offspring, that is, Geoffrey's very audience (see also *Berinus*, § 88). The surreal quality of this passage is remarkable and serves a specific purpose. In order to convince his audience and prove that he is a fool, Geoffrey fashions and controls his discourse so as to sound chaotic and irrational. By definition, rhetoric's function is to persuade. In his performance, Geoffrey applies an elaborate and persuasive rhetoric of folly, fuelled with popular motifs, traditional codes, all immediately recognized as signs of insanity. He uses hybrid parturition as a prominent trope because it constitutes a manifest transgression of natural laws. Similarly, parricide — no matter how playful — is an obvious social transgression. *Transgression* is a *rule* in the grammar of folly, and the specific motifs of hybridity and parricide are favoured tropes in the fool's rhetoric, tropes emblematic of the rule of transgression.

Folly's grammar and tropes have been linked to nonsense popular poetry and topsy-turvydom.[55] Sandra Billington praises *Mankind*'s playwright for 'the skill with which he included popular foolery' in his pre-Lent play.[56] Highlighting the fact that popular poetry is known to us through clerks' writings, Richard Axton argues that one is tempted to see *Mankind* 'as the Shrovetide *jeu d'esprit* of a group of Cambridge clerks'.[57] The same dynamic mixture of popular rhetoric and clerical wit in a carnivalesque context characterizes *Beryn*.[58] However, an important distinction between *Beryn* and *Mankind* must be stressed. *Mankind* uses folk references

[55] See Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, chap. 2.

[56] Billington, '"Suffer Fools Gladly"', pp. 46, 54.

[57] Richard Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1974), p. 201.

[58] The *Canterbury Interlude* ends with a mock battle evocative of carnivalesque mock jousts.

in association with the unquestionably negative, allegorical figures of the Vices. Such is not the case in *Beryn*, where Geoffrey is a vital character for the very reason that he is able to shift registers with a freedom and ease that are clearly cast in an appreciative light. In contrast to the conflict of linguistic and metaphysical registers between the folk-like Vices and the clerical, salvific Mercy in *Mankind*, *Beryn* stages a character who is positive because ambiguous, salutary because cunning, truly clerkly because capable of deliberately making a fool of himself. *Beryn* praises clerkliness by being self-parodic in its use of clerical knowledge — a stance typical of clerks' self-derisive acumen. The function of allegorical personifications in *Mankind* is to make the sharp antagonism between virtue and sin blatantly perceptible. Instead, Geoffrey's mouse plays with the audience's semantic efforts. The force of nonsense poetry consists in checkmating interpretations that contain language within teleological meanings. Meanwhile, the effect of nonsensicality is laughter, that is, the paralinguistic and kinesic expression of elation and semantic success — one laughs if he or she grasps the nonsensicality of the utterance. But this effect, in turn, can be used as a powerful semiotic weapon.

While semantic resistance is a central feature of the fool's discourse, its paradoxical correlative is the possibility to voice one's truth uncensored. Tristan proclaims his passion for the Queen, and Mark fails to hear the scandalous truth: he enjoys the joke. Similarly, everyone laughs to tears when Geoffrey announces that he is about to overcome the citizens in Beryn's trial.[59] Geoffrey claims that he will defeat Beryn's adversaries at their own judicial game. Such a truth is less romantic than Tristan's passionate love, but the process is the same. The grammar of folly is correctly reckoned by the audience and, for this very reason, truth is not heard when declared. The rhetoric of folly consists in producing a discourse and a series of signals, the grammar and semiotics of which are readily recognizable. The codes are properly used and interpreted and consequently produce a sense of verisimilitude. The correct reading of the fool's performance induces, however, a truth assessment programmatically mistaken. Misreading is the semantic effect intended and achieved by the appropriate application and perception of folly's grammatical rules, semiotic signals, and rhetorical devices.

Geoffrey's discursive and physical simulation may be linked to the tradition of clerical misrule that makes 'language play an instrument of power'.[60] The simulation

[59] 'Lawghed of Geoffrey that water on hir leres | Ran down from hie eyen for his mased wit' (*Beryn*, lines 3200–01). I discuss Beryn's trial in Bolens, 'Narrative Use'.

[60] John Ganim, *Chaucerian Theatricality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 114.

of folly serves as a weapon whereby power relationships are reversed. The fool fools his audience and outwits the wise: 'They held hym for a verry fole, but he held hem wel more, | And so he made hem in breff tyme, although they were nat shore' (*Beryn*, lines 3423–24). Geoffrey turns the citizens into fools, although their heads are not shorn. Geoffrey's unimpeachable legal defence at Beryn's trial strikes the Steward with consternation: 'The Steward sat as still as who had shore his hede' (line 3777). Geoffrey masterfully uses the sign of the shaved head to induce the idea of madness; the correct reading of this sign reverses the positions of power, and Geoffrey overcomes his opponents and metaphorically shaves their heads. Thus, *Beryn* shows a preoccupation with destabilized semantic processes and ambivalent truth-making assessments that evokes Chaucer's heterodox poetics.[61] It is through such issues that Chaucer's impact on his fifteenth-century follower ought to be measured. I make the hypothesis that *Beryn*'s author chose to translate *Berinus* into Middle English and add it to the *Canterbury Tales* because this association was relevant in his reception of Chaucer's work and, as I will argue in the last section of this essay, because it offered a meaningful background to his *Interlude*. Before reading the *Interlude*, a study of the *tregetour* in the *Tale* will help me further assess the significance of Geoffrey in *Beryn* as clerkly jester.

The Illusionist: From Tregetour *to Star Player*

In *Magic on the Early English Stage*, Philip Butterworth explains that the

> etymology of *tregetour*, as provided by the *OED*, appears to be mutually supported by Old French and Latin sources. The English word is derived from the twelfth-century French word 'tre(s)geteo(u)r', with its meaning as 'a juggler, mountebank, agent-noun of *tre(s)geter* to cast across or to and fro', and the Latin 'tra(ns)jectare', which is combined from *trans* and *jactare*, meaning 'to throw, cast'.[62]

Butterworth argues that this definition 'enabled the uncomfortable understanding to arise that "to throw, cast" is the same as "throwing up objects". This is a misleading interpretation and it is wrong'. Rather, casting and throwing in *tre(s)geter* have to do with 'the implicit concern for misdirection in the production of sleight of hand'.[63]

[61] See Michaela Paasche Grudin, 'Credulity and the Rhetoric of Heterodoxy: From Averroes to Chaucer', *Chaucer Review*, 35 (2000), 204–22.

[62] Philip Butterworth, *Magic on the Early English Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 191.

[63] Butterworth, *Magic on the Early English Stage*, p. 191.

Geoffrey in *Beryn* refers twice to *tregetours*, a word used by Chaucer in the *House of Fame* (lines 1260, 1277) and the *Franklin's Tale* (lines 1141, 1143).[64] Chaucer's *tregetours* have been 'glossed as jugglers or magicians'.[65] However, a more specific translation is 'illusionist', in the sense of *he who misdirects his audience's sight by inducing misperceptions*.[66] Chaucer in the *Franklin's Tale* links the 'subtile tregetoures pleye' (line 1141) to the clerkly power (learned in books) 'to maken illusioun' (line 1264), such as 'To remoeven alle the rokkes of Britayne, | And eek from Gerounde to the mouth of Sayne' (lines 1221–22). In the *House of Fame*, the narrator names a *tregetour* 'Colle', claiming that he saw him carry a windmill under a walnut shell (lines 1277–81). Butterworth notes that the fictional 'Colle tregetour' 'is indicative of other evidence of the word *tregetour* as a surname and/or a role'.[67] Albeit fictional, the naming of a particular *tregetour* gestures towards the personalization of the early modern star player.

Similarly, in his *Dance Macabre*, John Lydgate adds to the translation of his French source Henry V's *tregetour*, named 'Maistir Iohn Rikele', in the list of characters called upon by Death:

> Deeth to the Tregetour
> Maistir Iohn Rikele / some tyme Tregetour
> Of noble Harry / kyng of Engelond
> And of ffraunce / the mighty conquerour
> ffor alle the sleightes / and turnyng of thin hond
> Thou must come ner / this daunce to vunderstond
> Nought may auail / al thi conclusions
> ffor deeth shortly / nouther on see ne lond
> Is nought deceived / by none illusions. (*Dance Macabre*, stanza 65)[68]

Death may not be deceived by a *tregetour*'s illusions. This statement suggests that, in contrast to Death's irrepressible power, man's sight is unable to see through such illusions. While, in Lydgate's text, these illusions are produced by the *tregetour*'s

[64] *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[65] Laura Hibbard Loomis, 'Secular Dramatics in the Royal Palace, Paris, 1378, 1389, and Chaucer's "Tregetoures"', *Speculum*, 33 (1958), 242–55 (p. 242).

[66] The glossary to the *Riverside Chaucer* gives as a translation of *tregetour* 'illusionist, sleight-of-hand artist'.

[67] Butterworth, *Magic on the Early English Stage*, p. 190.

[68] John Lydgate, *Dance Macabre*, in *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey*, ed. by Eleanor Prescott Hammond (Durham: Duke University Press, 1927), pp. 124–42 (p. 139).

'sleightes / and turnyng of [his] hond', other *tregetours*, such as the jongleur d'Ely, are capable of equally confounding *semantic* illusions:

> Devaunt nostre sire en pleniere cour
> Sunt meint jogleur e meint lechour;
> Molt bien sevent de tricherie,
> D'enchauntementz e genglerie,
> E font parroistre par lur grymoire
> Voir come mençonge, mençonge come voire.
> Prions la doulce benoicte Marie
> Qe des Engleis ele eie merci,
> Prions que ele vueille semoigner
> Cil tregetours à sermoner
> E à nostre sire donner conseil
> Tiel come le loiax menestrel. (*Le Roi d'Angleterre*, p. 242)

> [In front of our sire in full court
> Are many a juggler and a lecher;
> They are experts in trickery,
> enchantments, and chatters
> And by means of their books of spells
> they make truth look like a lie and lies look true.
> Let us pray the sweet benign Mary
> that she has mercy on the English,
> Let us pray that she agrees to preach
> to these illusionists (*tregetours*)
> and advise our sire
> As does the loyal minstrel.]

In these lines, lexical proliferation blurs the distinction between deceiving *tregetours*, jongleurs, and a loyal minstrel who, oddly, is set on a par with either his sire or the Virgin. Indeed, 'tiel come' in the last line of the passage suggests either that Mary should preach to both the sire and the minstrel, or that the minstrel preaches to his sire as Mary does. Further, he who prays for the Virgin to have mercy on the English is himself a jongleur, and he states that jongleurs know how to deceive, to make the false appear true and vice versa. Such a stance is based on a self-reflexive semantic contradiction and is evocative of the liar paradox.

The jongleur's dialogue with the King of England continues in the same vein, playing with semantic ambiguities and double entendre. Finally,

> — 'Sire Roi,' feit le Jogler,
> 'Quei val sen ou saver?
> Ataunt valt vivre en folye
> Come en sen ou corteysie.' (*Le Roi d'Angleterre*, p. 249)

[— 'Sire King,' says the Jongleur,
'What is the value of sense and knowledge?
To live in folly is as good
as to live in sense and courtesy.']

To argue cleverly against the importance of knowledge and sense shows *a contrario* a preoccupation with knowledge, redolent of clerks' *subtilitas*.[69] This posture evokes Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, which presents a smart and 'sophisticated mock defence of foolish behaviour as preferable to rational acts'.[70] The fool, the jongleur, and the illusionist are linked insofar as they destabilize their audience's perceptual and semantic sense of control thanks to their cognitive and gestural litheness.

Further, clerk *sapientia* was often associated with unusual, even supernatural, powers and with necromancy. While Kitt in the *Interlude* toys with the assumption that clerks have the power to conjure up whom they wish to control (and possess sexually), Geoffrey in the *Tale* refers to *tregetours* when he explains to Beryn that he must walk through a heavenly garden to reach King Isope's chamber in his palace. Through his clerical learning, Isope created a garden that induces the illusion that one stands in paradise (*Beryn*, lines 2748–50). This garden is permanently watched and protected by eight *tregetours*, who are 'perfite [expert] of nygramancé' (line 2773). These guards have the power to control man's sight, a fact expressed via the concepts of *tregetrie*. The power of Isope's *tregetours* confers on them a strangely ominous weight, as the visual illusions they produce have radical effects, including death: more than five hundred men were devoured by lions conjured by their *tregetrie* (line 2781). In *Berinus*, the garden's watchmen are called 'folets de Syrie' (§ 78), but *Beryn*'s poet translated the French *folets* with the term *tregetours*, thus emphasizing the impact the watchmen have on their victims' sight.

Interestingly, the word *tregetour* occurs also in the blind man's accusation against Beryn. The claim pressed by the blind man is that Beryn stole his eyes to go and see illusionists in town ('To se the tregitours pley, and hir sotilté', line 3178). It is surely designedly ironic that the surreal accusation of stealing a blind man's eyes is supported by a reference to *tregetours*, since the latter play with people's sight. Geoffrey's legal defence against the blind man's accusation consists of a vast amplification of the theft story, which is proper to *Beryn*, not *Berinus*. In it, the numerous *tregetours* of the blind man's claim become one outstanding public performer — a 'player' whose subtlety turns him into a star performer (lines

[69] On clerks' *subtilitas*, see Jacqueline Cerquiglini, *'Un Engin si soutil': Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au XIV^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1985).

[70] Clifford Davidson, 'Introduction', in *Fools and Folly*, ed. by Davidson, pp. 1–8 (p. 5).

3687–3702). The success of this outstanding jongleur is so considerable that people in the region would not feel content unless they saw his mirth and game. The player announces a date for people to come to the big city and attend his show. Crowds gather to see the player's subtlety, impatient to see him perform 'merveles'. *Merveilles*, a French word evocative of Arthurian enchantments and fairies' interventions in lavish castles and mysterious forests, is now used to denote a successful public performance in a big city.[71] This narrative amplification attests to the advent of a new type in literature, that of the star performer. Further, the *tregetour*'s skill is qualified with the significant late medieval concept of *subtilitas*.[72] In *Beryn* the French word *sotilté* is used, which happens to contain the word *sot*. Polysemy here points towards *Beryn*'s literary and cultural outlook, in a passage reflecting the fifteenth-century development of theatricality in an increasingly urban environment. The *sotilté* of the sot points towards the dramatized folly of the fifteenth century, where simulating sots acting *with subtlety* in *sotties* are the applauded imitators of society's folly on city stages.

The unique and subtle player in Geoffrey's discourse is a new type of *tregetour* — an illusionist described by a simulator, Geoffrey, whose style of foolery is typical of late medieval players. This literary representation stages and multiplies the player figure: the text refers to a player, Geoffrey, who stages himself enacting the player while speaking of a player — who is himself an illusionist, a *tregetour*, a star performer. The simulating fool in *Beryn* foreshadows the emergence of a social protagonist of great importance in early modern culture. Geoffrey's player plans his show so that 'all maner of pepill' will come to town and attend it (line 3697). This aspect evokes the popular success of the early modern star jester. For example, the most famous star performer of the early Shakespearean era was Dick Tarlton, whose sharp wit and popular jig 'made him the favourite of labourer, city burgher, nobleman, and Queen alike'.[73] Tarlton brought to the early modern stage parodies of legal and religious forms associated with the jig, and developed the potentials of burlesque action in his role as a clown.[74] Geoffrey's foolish gestures before Beryn's trial and his legal parodies during it are not far behind. Religious behaviours are also parodied in *Beryn*, as will soon appear.

[71] See Christine Ferlampin-Acher, *Merveilles et topiques merveilleuses dans les romans médiévaux* (Paris: Champion, 2003).

[72] *Beryn* is clearly marked by the growing importance of *subtilitas*, as the French word *sotilté*, along with the anglicized adjective *subtle*, appear more than thirty times in the *Tale* alone.

[73] Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, p. 186.

[74] Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, p. 187.

Animal Metaphors and the Pardoner's Sottise

Scholars generally deem *Beryn*'s author, at best, an obedient but mediocre student of Chaucer and, at worst, the reactionary corrector of the subversive figure of the Pardoner. Robert Sturges sums up the pervasive consensus that all post-Chaucerian continuations, including *Beryn*, attempt to 'normalize' the Pardoner.[75] The main reason given for this assertion is that *Beryn*'s Pardoner is said (by himself and the narrator) to have heterosexual desires. *Beryn* 'fails to make good on Chaucer's sodomical suggestions about the Pardoner (though he still associates with the Summoner), and the impulse is toward normalization in that sense'.[76] The idea that reactionary normativity must be read in the Pardoner and hence in the *Interlude* is commonly accepted.[77] This interpretation, which systematically leaves out the *Tale*, dominates *Beryn*'s critical reception. I wish to propose a different perspective, acknowledging the use of figurality and folly in the entire text, as well as the author's choice to combine his *Interlude* with his adaptation of *Berinus* in his *Tale*.

Beryn's cultural network is typical of the fifteenth century. Chaucer's preacher proclaiming his evil intentions is, in *Beryn*, a fifteenth-century fool resembling a sot of French *sotties* and mock sermons. The Pardoner's *sottise* is explicit in the pilgrims' visit to Becket's shrine. This scene is farcical and can hardly be seen as a spiritual climax. The text focuses on protagonists called sots — including the Pardoner — who behave stupidly, misreading pictorial representations on a stained glass window and stealing pilgrim badges. The truly elusive signs of this scene are the sots themselves, whose blatant inadequacy opens up in front of the reader the trap of simplicity. Indeed, pious devotion has been read in ogling pilgrims — called 'lewd sots' and compared to stupid goats — once they kiss relics on their knees (lines 147–48, 163).[78] Rather, the text suggests that fools do not stop being fools

[75] Robert Sturges, *Chaucer's Pardoner and Gender Theory: Bodies of Discourse* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), p. 152.

[76] Sturges, *Chaucer's Pardoner and Gender Theory*, p. 154.

[77] See Elizabeth Allen, 'The Pardoner in the "Dogges Boure": Early Reception of the *Canterbury Tales*', *Chaucer Review*, 36 (2001), 91–127, reprinted in her *False Fables and Exemplary Truth in Later Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 111–31; Stéphanie Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 94; Robert S. Sturges, 'The Pardoner in Canterbury: Class, Gender, and Urban Space in the *Prologue to the Tale of Beryn*', *College Literature*, 33 (2006), 52–76.

[78] 'Whatever subversions of propriety and authority these actions [the kisses] represent on the part of their Chaucerian instigators, the Prologue [Interlude] makes sure they are erased and

when kneeling in a cathedral, and the fact that the focus of the shrine episode is on foolish pilgrims makes it difficult to read the scene as an expression of piety.

Much like Sebastian Brant's numerous and polyvalent fools, foolish pilgrims in *Beryn* are sots whether in a cathedral or a tavern. The asinine yodelling of the 'compaingnons' in *Le Jeu de la Feuillée*, considered to be the first *sottie* play, is echoed by a passage in the 'Sottie des sots triumphans' that stages comedians loudly singing with 'gueulle bee' (line 184; wide open mouths).[79] It is with such scenes in mind that we need to read the description of hollering pilgrims in the inn of the *Canterbury Interlude*, among whom the Pardoner: 'And stoden so holowing, for nothing wold they leve | Tyl the tyme that it was wel within eve' (lines 417–18). While the honourable members of the pilgrims' company go to bed early, others noisily misbehave like sots of joyous confraternities.

Another scene in the *Interlude* evokes a French mock sermon, evincing *Beryn*'s propensity to play with language's denotative function. The Pardoner in the *Canterbury Interlude* is intent on having sex with Kitt the Tapster and walks towards the barmaid's bedchamber in the still of the night, acting like the lover styled 'chien à la lune' in the French mock sermon entitled 'Sermon Joyeux et de Grande Value': he whines at a moonlike and already busy mistress.[80] Developing the dog simile to the full, the Pardoner in *Beryn* 'scraped the dorr welplich and wyned with his mowth | After a dogges lyden [manner], as nere as he couth' (lines 481–82). Wanting to be let in, the Pardoner chooses the dog metaphor to signify sexual desire. This passage is never considered in critical interpretations of the *Interlude*. Yet it matters that the Pardoner imitates an animal. All modern readings of the Pardoner's problematic gender in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are, after all, based on a double animal metaphor in the *General Prologue*: the narrator thought the Pardoner was a gelding or a mare (line 691).[81] In *Beryn* the Pardoner deliberately impersonates yet another animal metaphor. *Beryn*'s writer is sensitive to questions of figurality and reception. His entire text indicates a sharp awareness of linguistic and literary manoeuvres. In this sense, his performing Pardoner may be a jocular

replaced at Canterbury: both Miller and Pardoner, now on their knees and taking instruction from "a goodly monke", perform properly devotional kisses, "ech man with his mowth"': Glending Olson, 'The Misreadings of the *Beryn* Prologue', *Mediaevalia*, 17 (1994), 201–19 (p. 205).

[79] 'La Sottie des sots triumphans qui trompent chascun', in *Le Recueil Trepperel: Les Sotties*, ed. by Eugénie Droz (Paris: Droz, 1935; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1974), pp. 29–52 (p. 43).

[80] 'Sermon Joyeux et de Grande Value', in *Ancien théâtre françois*, ed. by M. Viollet Le Duc, 10 vols (Paris: Jannet, 1854), II, 207–22 (p. 213).

[81] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson.

response to Chaucer's heterodox and playful figures of speech. John Ganim argues that Chaucer's best, albeit problematic, defence to an accusation against literature is in a meaning that is 'enacted, even performed, in the self'.[82] *Beryn*'s Pardoner is a fictional character who enacts an animal metaphor. In Chaucer's portraits, protagonists are characterized by means of unsettling figures of speech; in *Beryn* they enact figures of speech.

In her chamber, Kitt lies with her lover, who pretends to take the Pardoner's animal impersonation literally, with comical effects (line 483). This simulated misreading makes the Pardoner immediately understand that he lost the upper hand, that 'his beard has been made'.[83] This colloquial expression evokes Chaucer's famously beardless Pardoner as well as a passage in the *Roi d'Angleterre*. In the latter, the Jongleur complains to the King of England that signs are systematically decoded and interpreted with inappropriate excess by Everyman.

> Si j'ay la barbe long pendaunt:
> 'Est cesti chevre ou pelrynaunt?'
> E si je n'ay barbe: 'Par seint Michel!
> Cesti n'est mie male, mès femmel.'
> E si je su long e graunt,
> Je serroi apelé geaunt;
> E si petitz sei de estat,
> Serroi apelé naym et mat. (*Le Roi d'Angleterre*, p. 255)
>
> [If my beard hangs low:
> 'Is this a she-goat or a pilgrim?'
> And if I am beardless: 'By Saint Michael!
> This one is not male but female.'
> And if I am tall and big,
> I shall be called a giant;
> And if I am of small stature,
> I shall be called dwarf and down.]

Beardlessness, according to the Jongleur, is sufficient to induce the reading — presented as preposterous — that a person's gender is necessarily female. In the *Roi d'Angleterre* this misreading is made by Everyman, a moot and misjudging figure. In the *Canterbury Tales* this man is Chaucer-the-narrator, who *thinks* (*trowe*, line 691) that the Pardoner is a 'non-man' since he cannot grow a beard. The possibility that Chaucer parodically stages a typical misreading — typical in view of the tradition

[82] Ganim, *Chaucerian Theatricality*, p. 52.

[83] '"A!" thought the Pardoner tho. "I trow my berd he made!"' (line 485).

extant in the *Roi d'Angleterre* — should not be disregarded. The *Roi d'Angleterre* toys with the inadequacy of postlapsarian language and the ambivalence of sign interpretation, and so does Chaucer throughout his works.[84] In the *Pardoner's Tale* in particular, the specific act of *mis*reading metaphors is thematized, when the three revellers mistakenly interpret a metaphor (death as a thief) as an actual denotation and look for the criminal — a mistake that leads them to their actual death.

With this literary network in mind, it is noteworthy that *Beryn*'s Pardoner should be bitten by a dog and forced to lie with the beast until dawn, after his farcical and carnivalesque battle with the paramour and the hosteller. In short, he chooses an animal metaphor, enacts the trope, and then meets with the real thing — which bites him. Chaucer's revellers, while seeking an actual thief, find death when they kill each other. *Beryn*'s Pardoner ends up spending the night with a dog, he who behaved like one in order to elicit sex. The dog episode in the *Interlude* must be read in relation to the Pardoner's dog imitation. A trope or figure of speech is performed and becomes bitingly real. At the same time, lexical choices play with a sense of unreliable verisimilitude. Indeed, the dog is first a *whelp*, then becomes a *great Welsh dog*, and ends up a *monster*, a 'warrok', which catches the Pardoner by the thigh (lines 632–40). The dog's denotations fluctuate in relation to the perception of an increasingly worried Pardoner. In Wolfgang Iser's words:

> the area of indeterminacy as a play space is no longer organized in accordance with a given set of rules [in early modern literature], as was the case in allegory, typology, and the system of correspondences. Instead, it takes shape according to the viewpoints of those concerned.[85]

The reading grid of animal symbolisms, often pertinent in medieval texts, is inapplicable in the *Interlude*. Such aspects indicate that *Beryn* anticipates a treatment of verisimilitude, which, according to Iser, marks early modern literature.[86]

Further, the burlesque sexual innuendo of the scene is conspicuous in the image of the Pardoner with a bitten thigh, wishing to please the animal — albeit with bread — and come closer to it. But the dog growls, ready to snatch, and the Pardoner waits for dawn, still as a stone ('Wherfor the Pardoner durst nat with hym

[84] I do not wish to imply that Chaucer necessarily knew *Le Roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ely*, although it is possible that he did; cf. Carter Revard, 'From French "Fabliau Manuscripts" and MS Harley 2253 to the *Decameron* and the *Canterbury Tales*', *Medium Ævum*, 69 (2000), 261–78.

[85] Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 65–66.

[86] Cf. Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, chap. 2: 'Renaissance Pastoralism as a Paradigm of Literary Fictionality', pp. 22–28.

mache, | But lay as styll as eny stone', lines 652–53). Finally, the narrator remarks that when the other pilgrims get ready to leave Canterbury in the morning, the Pardoner does not have much to do, save shake his ears a little ('Saff shake a lite his eres', line 660). The text plays with the boundary between the literal and the figural, and the writer of *Beryn* is skilled at achieving comic effects with situations, dynamics, and postures, be it a character holding his breath in a kennel and shaking his ears like a dog when getting up or, as in the Pardoner's mock battle, running as fast as possible in a pitch-dark kitchen, brandishing a ladle, and with a helmet-pan falling off his head. Humour is an important cue in this text, and if overlooked induces misleading interpretations.

In his article on folly and madness in *Beryn*, Stephen Harper rightly claims that *Beryn* 'represents a turning point in the literary use of the theme of folly at the end of the Middle Ages'.[87] Harper's analysis of folly in *Beryn* differs, however, from mine in that he situates folly in the context of medieval didactic literature, where folly is associated with sin, vice, and spiritual turpitude. His main emphasis is on a parallel he draws between *Kyng Robert of Cicyle*, *Sir Gowther*, and *Beryn*. In the former romances, the main protagonist is a sinful ruler à la Nebuchadnezzar, cast down by divine punishment and forced to live like a dog.[88] 'After a suitable period of abjection, however, he becomes "Godes child".'[89] Referring to the Pardoner, Harper writes: 'his unfortunate association with the watchdog, in particular, identifies him with the fool-sinners Robert of Sicily and Sir Gowther, who must also lead a "dog's life" for their sins.'[90] Given the openly farcical mood of the *Interlude*, I find it difficult to read a sense of spiritual atonement in the Pardoner's posture in the kennel. After all, the Pardoner is lying with a dog because he was trying to have sex with a barmaid whose boyfriend had the upper hand, not because of a divine intervention. Moreover, the Pardoner's posture is unlikely to cause the salvation of his soul. The pilgrim's sole achievement during the night is to catch a cold, a result of his profuse sweating: 'For after his hete, he caughte a cold thurh the nyghtes eyr' (line 630). Rather than religious didacticism, *Beryn* is concerned with fiction and play in the form of clerk parodies and a farcical folly.

[87] Stephen Harper, '"Pleyng with a Yerd": Folly and Madness in the Prologue and *Tale of Beryn*', *Studies in Philology*, 101 (2004), 299–314 (p. 299).

[88] On this concept of folly, see Penelope Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

[89] Harper, '"Pleyng with a Yerd"', p. 301.

[90] Harper, '"Pleyng with a Yerd"', p. 302.

In the final mock battle between Kitt's lover, the innkeeper, and the Pardoner, the latter uses kitchen utensils — a pan for a helmet, a ladle for a sword.[91] To turn weapons into food and to use kitchen utensils as weapons are carnivalizing subversions.[92] Interestingly, the popular motif of the frying pan survived through centuries in the topsy-turvydom of Mummers' plays. For example, in the Mummers' play of Ovingdean (Sussex), Beelzebub's head is not just helmeted with a pan, as is the case with *Beryn*'s Pardoner: pan and head have coalesced.

> In come I old Father Bellzie Bub,
> Over my shoulder I carry my club.
> My head is made of a dripping pan
> And don't you think I am a handsome young man.[93]

Weimann's discussion of the influence of popular rhetorical traditions on Renaissance drama shows the significance of such motifs. 'The topsy-turvy or nonsense speech which so frequently appears in the Mummers' Plays is the most characteristic of all folk humor.'[94]

In the 1490s, Henry Medwall uses carnivalesque imagery in his humanist interlude *Fulgens and Lucres*.[95] A mock joust between two servants in *Fulgens* echoes the Pardoner's parodic battle in the *Canterbury Interlude*.[96] The contest's elusive prize is Kitt's sister in spirit, cunning Joan, who is hailed thus by one of her suitors: 'Com forthe, ye flowre of the frying pane, | Helpe ye to aray us as well as ye can' (*Fulgens*,

[91] See Frederick Jonassen, 'Cathedral, Inn, and Pardoner in the *Prologue to The Tale of Beryn*', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 18 (1991), 109–32.

[92] See Jon Cook, 'Carnival and *The Canterbury Tales*: "Only equals may laugh" (Herzen)', in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. by David Aers (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), pp. 169–91 (p. 180).

[93] *The Mummers' Play*, ed. by R. J. E. Tiddy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p. 203.

[94] Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, p. 33. See also Nancy Freeman Regalado, 'Masques réels dans le monde de l'imaginaire: le rite et l'écrit dans le Charivari du *Roman de Fauvel*, MS. B.N. FR. 146', in *Masques et déguisements dans la littérature médiévale*, ed. by Marie-Louise Ollier (Paris: Vrin; Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1988), pp. 111–26 (p. 120).

[95] *Fulgens and Lucres* is the earliest wholly secular play that has survived to this day. It was published *c.* 1513–19 by John Rastell, brother-in-law to Thomas More, 'in whose circle Medwall mixed' (Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre*, p. 138).

[96] On the contestants' fighting mode in *Fulgens*, see Peter Meredith, '"Farte Pryke in Cule" and Cock-Fighting', *Medieval English Theatre*, 6 (1984), 30–39.

lines 1170–71).[97] The mock-epic epithet bestowed upon Joan, flower of the frying pan, points towards the carnivalesque association of kitchen utensils and parodic battles. So does the Pardoner, helmeted as he is with a pan flying off his head. *Beryn* intermingles popular nonsense poetry with a complex, albeit playful, use of figurality, and fools in this text are the vectors of this association.

According to Peter Travis, late medieval philosophers, and Chaucer as well, were particularly concerned with the question of the figural.[98] I propose that the Pardoner's performance in *Beryn* may be seen as a response to Chaucer's play with the figural. Kathryn Lynch stresses the relevance of philosophical and linguistic questions in Chaucer's works, which accounts for the poet's interest in issues debated in his intellectual milieu, such as referentiality and denotation. Chaucer's *gelding or mare* double metaphor evokes an example offered by the nominalist philosopher William of Ockham: 'nam eadem facilitate dicerem, quod homo, si consideretur sic, est asinus; si aliter, est bos; si tertio modo, est capra' ('For with the same ease I could say that a man considered in one way is an ass, considered in another way he is an ox, and considered in a third way he is a she-goat').[99] An ox, like a gelding, is castrated. The *gelding or mare* association strangely echoes Ockham's example, *bos* or *capra*, 'ox' or 'she-goat'. Both cases bespeak the possibility of using metaphors of castrated or female animals to denote a man. The Pardoner's enacted animal metaphor in *Beryn* is admittedly neither female nor castrated. But it is foolish. It is through foolishness performed by a sot that *Beryn* poses the problems of figurality, referentiality, and denotation, calling for a rich network of associations which range from the Jongleur d'Ely's jocular *chèvre* to Ockham's erudite *capra*. It is thus that *Beryn* raises the issues of conceptual categories, such as *human* and *animal*, and hierarchical binarisms, such as high vs. low culture.

In this essay I have considered a variety of fools sharing a common language of folly. In many instances, destabilizing animal metaphors suggest a pervading, unsettling use of figurality. The indignant ox and greedy swans in Merlin's prophecies, Tristan's parental walrus and whale, Geoffrey's imploding mouse in *Berinus* and *Beryn*, Chaucer's gelding or mare, the Jongleur d'Ely's goat or pilgrim, and the Pardoner's performance as a whining whelp in *Beryn*'s *Interlude*, when read in

[97] Henry Medwall, 'Fulgens and Lucres', in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Walker, pp. 305–47 (p. 328).

[98] Peter Travis, 'Chaucer's Heliotropes and the Poetics of Metaphor', *Speculum*, 72 (1997), 399–427 (p. 424).

[99] William of Ockham, 'The Notion of Knowledge or Science', in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. by Philoteus Boehner (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1957) pp. 1–16 (p. 14).

connection, indicate that 'the fool' in these texts has a vital literary role — that of juggling with language's capacity to defeat its own denotative function. This, according to Iser, is a fundamental quality of fictionalizing acts. Language is all we have to name the impossibility of naming, and this very impossibility is in fact the matrix of fiction. The fool figure, present in so many different guises in *Beryn*, is crucial in that he incarnates and performs language's power to transgress its own intrinsic limitations. The power of language to dysfunction and destabilize denotation creates the play space in which the imaginary — by definition indeterminate — can be cast into unforeseen determinate forms, thus giving shape to the hybrid and surprising faces of new literatures to come.

A Fool and a Troubadour: Folly in the Legend of Peire Vidal

Susanna Niiranen

The troubadour Peire Vidal (fl. 1183–1204) was an original talent according to many of his twelfth- and thirteenth-century contemporaries. He was also characterized as 'the maddest' or 'the most foolish man that ever lived', and his life was linked with a series of bewildering excursions and events. Modern historians have interpreted his 'apparent foolishness', as a 'distinct trait of his poetic personality',[1] his figure as an 'exuberant personality',[2] and even as 'a possessor of that genius which is akin to madness'.[3] Of the more than four hundred known Occitan troubadours flourishing roughly between 1090 and 1290, Peire Vidal is the only one described as a 'fool' or a 'madman' in medieval sources.

In the numerous stories which constitute the legend of Peire Vidal, why might he not limit himself to the traditional role of the successful troubadour? The *vidas* and *razos*,[4] commonly referred to jointly as the biographies of the troubadours,

[1] 'La aparente locura de Peire Vidal, rebuscada como rasgo distintivo de su personalidad poética': Martín de Riquer, *Los trovadores: Historia literaria y textos*, 3 vols (Barcelona: Planeta, 1975), II, 866.

[2] *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, ed. by R. T. Hill and T. G. Bergin, 2nd edn, rev. and enl. by T. G. Bergin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 119.

[3] *Trobador Poets: Selections from the Poems of Eight Trobadors*, trans. with notes and introduction by Barbara Smythe (London: Chatto and Windus, 1911; repr. Cambridge, ON: In Parentheses, 2000), p. 145.

[4] The most significant of the non-lyric texts are the *vidas* and the *razos* which constitute 'the richest surviving source of information about Old Occitan poets'. The *vida* is 'a brief account, typically explaining who the troubadour was, whence he came, what his status was, what he was like, whom he loved, what kinds of songs he wrote, and where he died. The *razo*, in contrast, is a

indeed contain both factual and fictive elements. For some reason, the theme of foolishness traverses his biography as a leitmotif.[5] So, was Peire a true lunatic or simply a professional entertainer, an artificial fool? We only know what kind of reactions his behaviour evoked. In this essay, on the one hand, I examine the nature of the 'foolishness' of Peire Vidal by analysis of his poetic voice and by identifying individual qualities, acts, and gestures, legendary though they may be, which distinguish him from other troubadours. On the other hand, I investigate what implications his peculiar characteristic, folly, holds for our understanding of his professional career, his reputation, and the remembrance of him. Even if the value of the medieval biographies lies not always in their faithful reconstruction of real events, a fool-troubadour's portrait shows that folly was not only a personal trait but also the reflection of the values and attitudes of the whole community.

Peire Vidal: A Loved and Gifted Fool

Peire's anonymous biographer says that he was a 'fool', 'who was loved because of his great poetic talent and his creative foolishness' ('E si s'entendia [. . .] per lo ric trobar et per las ricas folias'), or even that 'he was the most foolish man that ever lived' ('Fo dels plus fols omes que mai fossen').[6]

In modern translations, the Old Occitan term *fol* is alternatively translated as the noun 'fool' or as the adjective 'mad' and similarly *follia* as 'foolishness', 'folly', or 'madness'. To start with, it might be necessary to define folly in relation to madness. Traditionally, fools are usually seen as innocent and friendly, differentiated from dangerously disturbed madmen. Moreover, foolishness was seen as inborn, while madness could burst at any time. These two notions are often blurred but, in general, all deviance was laughable if it was not really threatening. Naturally, anybody acting in a deviant way could be a fool or a madman occasionally, but fools can be defined as those whose personality, behaviour, and ways of thinking were

little story in prose that explains how a particular troubadour came to compose a specific song': Elizabeth W. Poe, 'The Vidas and Razos', in *A Handbook of the Troubadours*, ed. by F. R. P. Akehurst and Judith M. Davis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 185–97 (pp. 185–86).

[5] Ernest Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal: sa vie et son œuvre* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1961), p. 181.

[6] 'Lo fols Peire Vidals. Razo Ba', 'Razo Bb', and 'Vida A', in *Biographies des Troubadours: textes provençaux des XIII^e^ et XIV^e^ siècles*, ed. by Jean Boutière and Alexandre H. Schutz (Aubenas: Nizet, 1964), p. 356, p. 361, and p. 351. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

essentially different from the norm. Distinctions have been made also between natural and artificial fools: a natural fool is a simpleton with limited intellect, whereas an artificial fool has only assumed the role of a fool. In practice, the technical determination of the fool is not always as simple as that. Another classification of medieval and Renaissance fools divides them into three groups according to function and whereabouts: 1) domestic and court fools; 2) temporary fools of the festive tradition; and 3) professional fools in performances in theatres and other arenas.[7]

The nature of Peire's foolishness is not clearly defined anywhere, but traits of his deviant behaviour can be extracted from the stories in biographies and references made by other troubadours. According to this material, Peire's behaviour might have been excessive, extravagant, or frivolous, but never violent or aggressive towards other people. His professional position in various courts situates him closer to the category of fool than among seriously disturbed madmen and idiots. Therefore, I use the terms fool, folly, and foolishness instead of madman and madness.[8]

A Furrier's Son as a Troubadour

Traditionally, Occitan troubadours were poet-musicians who flourished from the end of the eleventh century to the thirteenth century. They were drawn from a wide variety of social backgrounds: kings and great lords, the nobility and poor knights, the sons of the bourgeois and clerks, or those of poor origins (*de paubra generacion*). There are some references made by the troubadours themselves to 'schools' and Latin literature, but it is likely that many troubadours picked up their techniques by listening to and imitating their counterparts, rather than studying in a formal school. Their elaborately composed stanzas could not result from a spontaneous burst of feeling as has sometimes been believed, but from sound musical and poetical skills and training. Indeed, musical and poetical education of some level was needed even if the troubadour lyrics were composed in a vernacular language, now called Old Occitan.[9] Some troubadours were extremely popular and

[7] Anu Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest: The Fool in Renaissance England* (Turku: Painosalama, 1999), pp. 12–13 and 135–43.

[8] Emil Levy gives the Modern French 'fou' (substantive or adjective) for the provençal word *fol*, and 'folie' or 'injure' for the substantive *folia*; *Petit dictionnaire provençal-français* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1961).

[9] Susanna Niiranen Ensenhamen, 'Educational Ideal and Elite Women in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Occitania', in *Hoping for Continuity: Childhood, Education and Death in*

their songs diffused in different versions in numerous manuscripts. In contrast, others were less popular and their songs survived only occasionally and often anonymously.

Twelve of Peire Vidal's *canso* melodies and forty-five of his lyrics survive, which is a considerable number.[10] In his poetry, Peire Vidal used a kind of 'hybrid genre' combining the conventions of different genres which is an unprecedented stylistic device, conscious or not.[11] His poetry was not as obscure as, for example, Arnaut Daniel's, but his style is none too easy; Peire Vidal is among those generally considered as a moderately difficult poet.[12] The *vida* tells how he was the one for whom writing poetry came most naturally.[13] Peire Vidal himself, using the first-person poetic voice typical of troubadour poetry, boasts:

> Ajostar e lassar
> sai tan gent motz e son,
> que del car ric trobar
> nom ven hom al talo.[14]
>
> [I know how to assemble and interlace words and melody so finely that no one among the precious *trobar ric* poets comes near my heel.]

The *trobar ric*, or rich form of poetry, was distinguished by its technicality, elaborate ornamentation, rare rhymes, and complex rhyme patterns, the best exponent of which is considered the troubadour Arnaut Daniel. Peire creates by the use of the first-person an intimacy between audience and narrator so typical of the troubadour. By his own presence in the poem, whether genuine or dramatic, the poet draws his audience into his work and, at the same time, is convincing for his audience and his patrons. It is also possible that the medieval audience saw in the

Antiquity and the Middle Ages, ed. by Katariina Mustakallio and others, Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae, 33 (Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2005), pp. 166–77 (p. 176).

[10] In lyric genres, a central division is generally made between the love song (*canso*) and the invective (*sirventes*). Attributions of songs to Peire Vidal vary up to fifty pieces; see Alfred Pillet and Henry Carstens, *Bibliographie der Troubadours* (Niemeyer: Halle, 1933), pp. 315–25. Except for the troubadours Guiraut de Borneilh (eighty pieces) and Guiraut Riquier (more than eighty), the number of extant pieces of the most famous troubadours varies ordinarily from ten to twenty.

[11] *Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouvères: An Anthology and a History*, ed. and trans. by Frederick Goldin (New York: Anchor, 1973), p. 248.

[12] F. R. P. Akehurst, 'Introduction', in *A Handbook of the Troubadours*, ed. by Akehurst and Davis, pp. 1–9 (p. 5).

[13] 'Vida A', in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, p. 351.

[14] *Peire Vidal: Poesie*, ed. by D'Arco Silvio Avalle, 2 vols (Milan: Ricciardi, 1960), I, 37.

'poetic I' a representative of mankind and was interested in the symbolic role of the poet.[15]

Peire himself and his biographer(s) were not the only admirers of his poetic style. However, while some troubadours remarked upon his poetry and on his personality, certain comments might have had an ironic tone, like the following mention in a satirical *sirventes* of the troubadour Uc de Lescura: 'De mots ricos no tem Peire Vidal' (I do not fear the elegant language of Peire Vidal).[16] Marquis of Lanza openly mocks his mental qualities: 'Que non a sen ni saber ni membranza' (That he has neither common sense, nor knowledge, nor memory).[17] Similarly, in his satire of troubadours, contemporary Monge de Montaudon mentions Peire Vidal as 'the last' (meaning the most ridiculous) troubadour who has 'neither memory nor common sense'.[18] Also the troubadour Blacatz criticizes him for the same lack of discretion in his deeds, but regards his art with respect saying: 'Et en trobar avetz saber e sen' (In composing you have knowledge and common sense).[19]

Peire Vidal defends himself claiming that he has perfect common sense while those accusing him expose their own lack of judgement.[20] Despite these critical quipsters his poetry was admired especially by Italian poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as Bertolome Zorzi, Uc de Lescura, Terramagnino of Pisa, and Petrarch.[21] This mix of responses among contemporaries and near-contemporaries might be a sign of his ambiguous position in society. Nonetheless, neither in texts nor in manuscript illustrations is he presented as a typical jester or a court-fool with traditional clothes or gestures of the fool.[22] Miniatures portraying

[15] Leo Spitzer, 'Note on the Poetic and the Empirical "I" in Medieval Authors', *Trad*, 4 (1946), 414–22 (p. 416); Dayle Seidenspinner-Núñez, *The Allegory of Good Love: Parodic Perspectivism in the Libro de Buen Amor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 40; A. C. Spearing, *Criticism and Medieval Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), pp. 17–20 and p. 78.

[16] Riquer, *Los trovadores*, II, 927.

[17] *Peire Vidal, Poesie*, ed. by Avalle, II, 419.

[18] *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, ed. by Hill and Bergin, p. 144.

[19] *Tenso* (between Blacatz and Peire Vidal), in Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal*, p. 181.

[20] Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal*, pp. 124–27, p. 181.

[21] On Peire Vidal's influence in Italian poetry, see William D. Paden, 'Bertran de Born in Italy', in *Italian Literature, Roots and Branches: Essays in Honor of T. G. Bergin*, ed. by Giose Rimanelli and Kenneth J. Atchity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 39–66 (p. 43).

[22] Fools and their gestures were usually seen as grotesque, ugly, and deformed. As a distinctive trait, the customary clothing was a multicoloured garment, but many court fools were dressed in typical courtiers' costume (Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest*, pp. 165–68).

Vidal show him in a conventional way with the gesture of the 'communicative hand', that is, a hand raised towards a visible or imaginable interlocutor (see Figure 1). In the texts, there are actually two categories of *follias*: the follies he committed (*fazia*) and those he uttered (*dizia*).[23] Peire's follies more often relate to the second category, which questions his professional competence as a troubadour. He was a man who needed a 'silver tongue'.[24] The voice — speech and language — was indeed the lifeblood for troubadours. Besides composing and performing rhymed stanzas, they stimulated their aristocratic audience by conversation. A troubadour probably began his performance by telling stories and demonstrating his knowledge as a kind of 'warm-up'. On the simplest level this knowledge consisted of traveller's gossip, for in courtly circles a well-travelled troubadour enjoyed a conversational advantage as he was able to report items of news that he had learned as he moved from place to place. If the company fell silent listening, he began with his material in rhyme.[25] Traditionally, a clear distinction has been drawn between the lower sort of *joglars* and the more refined troubadours, but in fact many troubadours were called both *trobadors* and *joglars*.[26] The technique of storytelling and musical performing included gestures and body movement that led to censure, and the behaviour of *joglars* could be the subject of moralizing or satirizing.[27]

The lyric of troubadours was not grounded in intellectual learning, but its principle is art as *techne*, as craftsmanship.[28] This concept of technical craft is already

[23] For example, 'E majors fulias dis d'armas e d'amor et de mal dir d'autrui' ('Vida A'; He told the greatest follies of arms, of love, and of calumniation); 'Las ricas folias que Peire Vidal dizia e fazia [...] las folias qu'el fazia ni dizia' ('Razo Bb'; The creative follies that Peire Vidal said and did [...] the follies that he did and said): *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, p. 351 and p. 361.

[24] *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, ed. by Hill and Bergin, p. 144. See also pp. 55–57 below.

[25] Christopher Page, *Voices & Instruments of the Middle Ages* (London: Dent & Sons, 1987), pp. 27–28.

[26] See, for example, the *vidas* of Arnaut Daniel and of Peire Rogier, former canon of Clermont: *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, p. 59 and p. 267.

[27] Church moralists condemned *joglars*. *Joglars*, although associated with loose morals, were seen by the laity as being comical, whether intentionally or not. See Ruth Harvey, 'Courtly Culture in Medieval Occitania', in *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, ed. by Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 8–27 (p. 22).

[28] The concept of *techne* goes back to the poetic tradition of antiquity. See Jesper Svenbro, *La parola e il marmot: Alle origini della poetica greca*, trans. by P. Rosati (Turin: Boringhieri, 1984), pp. 125–45.

Figure 1. Peire Vidal with communicative hand gesture (Troubadour Manuscript I), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 854, fol. 39. Thirteenth century. Reproduced with the permission of the BnF.

apparent in the songs of the earliest troubadour, Guillaume IX of Aquitaine (1071–1126), count of Poitou, and is emphasized throughout the courtly tradition,[29] 'courtly' meaning rather a space (court, castle) or a literary mode than aristocratic birth, despite associations with the earliest-named troubadour.[30] Peire Vidal was neither noble nor rich. He recounts in a poem:

> Non ai castel serrate de mur
> Ni ma terra no val dos gans (*Ges del joi*, lines 25–26)[31]

[I don't have any castle surrounded by walls and my lands are not worth two gloves.]

We don't know the educational background of Peire Vidal but we do know he was a son of a *pellissier* (a furrier or a merchant of fur goods). The information concerning his life is gathered mainly from the one *vida* and the three *razos* about him that survive. In addition to the biographies, there are some intertextual references to his life made by other troubadours and one relevant document.[32] There are no mentions of his childhood and there is no information as to why he did not take on his father's occupation in Toulouse but engaged in song-making, travelling around Southern Europe.

Apparently, he began his troubadour wanderings early and during his life stayed mainly in Provençal and Italian courts. From 1194 to 1195, he resided at the court of Boniface of Montferrat whose court was frequented by troubadours and *joglars*.[33] He also had close relations to some Spanish courts and rulers, such as Alfons VIII of Castile and Alfons II of Aragon. According to the biographies, he travelled to Cyprus and to the Holy Land. In the first years of the thirteenth century he was

[29] Pierre Bec, *Le Comte de Poitiers, premier troubadour: à l'aube d'un verbe et d'une erotique* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier 3, 2004), pp. 202–03; *Arnaut Daniel, Canzoni*, ed. by Gianluigi Toja (Florence: Sansoni, 1960), p. 271.

[30] According to information in the *vidas* (*Biographies des Troubadours*), fifteen out of a hundred and one troubadours came, like Peire Vidal, from bourgeois families and backgrounds.

[31] Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal*, p. 15.

[32] Several persons named 'Petrus Vitalis' are known from the Toulouse region, but contemporary records give contradictory information so the identities cannot be established (Riquer, *Los trovadores*, II, 858).

[33] Boniface of Montferrat received so much praise from the poets that Peire Vidal recounts that *joglars* had already said so much good of the Marquis that nothing was left for him to add (*Peire Vidal: Poesie*, ed. by Avalle, I, 107).

probably hosted in Malta.[34] With certainty, the last group of his songs is dated 1204–07.[35]

Follies of Language: Peire Vidal's 'Silver Tongue'

As a troubadour, Peire Vidal settled down at Marseille in the service of Raimon Barral, viscount of Marseilles (1178–92). Despite the questionable acts of Peire, Barral appeared to be very tolerant towards his protégé. It is explained that he favoured Peire because of 'his songs and his follies'.[36] Very often, patrons showed their affection to favourite troubadours. The relationship between a master and his servant or his protégé was frequently close and personal. An indication of their friendship is that Barral and Vidal called each other by a mutual name (*Rainier*), a custom between a troubadour and his protector. Troubadours were to love their masters above all others. Love and liking were the basis of the court performer's or personal servant's position, be he a troubadour or a fool, and the performer had no great obligations other than to provide mirth.[37]

One proof of Peire and Barral's long-lasting friendship, and of Barral's tolerance, is the episode of the stolen kiss. Peire Vidal was said to be in love with the wife of Barral. One day when Barral was away, Peire went to her room and kissed her as she slept. This act of the troubadour was not a ceremonial kiss nor an intimate one, but a gesture of inversion and transgression of both of them, legitimizing his reputation as a fool. Feeling the kiss and thinking that it was her husband, she started up, smiling, then looked and saw that it was 'that fool of a Peire Vidal' (*e vi lo fol de Peire Vidal*) and began to cry out and to make a noise. Peire was afraid of the wife's anger and fled Marseille and went to Genoa, continuing to address the viscountess in his songs. At the entreaty of her husband, the lady forgave the poet, and Peire was able to return to Marseille. Apparently several of Peire's poems are paying homage to the wife of Barral.

However, it was not Viscount Barral, but another outraged husband who had the troubadour's tongue cut out — a serious punishment for a minstrel, who made

[34] Joseph M. Brincat, 'Le Poesie Maltesi di Peire Vidal: 1204–05', *Melita Historica*, 7 (1976), 65–89.

[35] *Peire Vidal: Poesie*, ed. by Avalle, II, 404.

[36] 'Razo Ba', in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, p. 356; see also 'Razo Bb', p. 361.

[37] Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest*, pp. 190–91.

his living by singing and telling stories. Peire had claimed he was the lover of his wife. The troubadour had some good fortune, for he was taken care of by a friend and cured. The only reference to this incident along with the *vida* is the mention of the troubadour Monge de Montaudon. In his satire, the 'monk' of Montaudon declares that Peire 'would need a silver tongue' (*Et agrail ops lenga d'argen*).[38] This can be interpreted literally, that Peire needed a new, better tongue, or metaphorically, that he should better weigh his words or even keep his mouth shut.[39]

The echoes of Peire's misadventures are visible in the comments of contemporary troubadours: Monge de Montaudon hints that Peire is physically deficient ('Que non a sos membres entiers'; that he has no complete members),[40] probably referring to his severed tongue. This may be a misunderstanding but nevertheless is consistent with the fact that physical deficiencies made a person deviant and laughable, especially a fool.[41] In fact, Peire was an object of several forms of physical maltreatment: besides the presumed cutting of the tongue, he is said to have been hit a hundred times. He was also badly wounded in the episode of the wolf hunt.[42] Real or not, these scenes of violence speak volumes about the practice that deviant persons should be bound in order to keep them away from harm. Furthermore, they show that even if Peire was favoured by eminent lords and ladies, his social position (birth and mental condition) was still low, and as such, he was prone to mistreatment.

Peire is said to have followed Richard Coeur de Lion on his crusade; it was in 1190 that Richard embarked at Marseilles for the Holy Land. During the trip, Peire married a Greek woman, the supposed 'niece of the Emperor of Constantinople'.[43] Therefore, according to the *vida*, he had a claim to the throne of Greece. He assumed royal state, added a throne to his personal possessions and began to raise a fleet for the conquest of his kingdom. How long this farce continued is

[38] *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, ed. by Hill and Bergin, p. 144.

[39] 'Vida A', in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, p. 351; Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal*, p. 38.

[40] *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, ed. by Hill and Bergin, p. 144.

[41] Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest*, p. 12; Alfred Jeanroy (*La Poésie lyrique des troubadours,* 2 vols (Toulouse: Didier-Privat, 1934; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1973), I, 142) proposes that *joglars* were lame persons, but there is no evidence for that suggestion.

[42] Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal*, p. 4; 'Vida A' and 'Razo C', in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, pp. 353–54, p. 369.

[43] 'Vida A', in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, p. 351.

unknown. In a thirteenth-century manuscript, he is pictured in a miniature in imperial clothes and garments on a white horse.[44] A woman on the balcony dressed in the Byzantine mode is his wife. His assumed royal state and his imperial accoutrements have been interpreted as metaphors of Peire Vidal's superiority in his art.[45] Hoepffner, for his part, considers the 'title' of emperor to be related to Peire's fief in Genoa where he enjoyed his stay and seemed to be happy. There, in Italy, he was lord of his land and the uncrowned emperor of the troubadours. However, Vidal's honesty is questionable; his own mention of being a friend of *borboillos* (liars and rascals) indicates that the virtue of honesty was not important to him.[46] Even if we do not know if Peire Vidal really dressed himself in such an excessive manner, in the miniature his visual appearance reflects his foolish, idle talk.[47]

Viscount Barral died in 1192. The relationship of Peire and Barral seems finally to be deeper than that of Peire and Barral's wife for, after the death of his friend and patron in Marseille, Peire addressed his affections elsewhere. His attention was directed this time to a lady of Carcassonne, Loba de Pennautier, about whom is told the fantastic story of the wolf hunt.

Lady Loba and the She-wolf: The Fool's Animal Love

In his five *cansos* dedicated to Lady Loba, Peire Vidal is playing on the name 'Loba'. He is using both the forms *Na Loba* (Lady Loba) and *la Loba* (the she-wolf).[48] The wolf-metaphor develops in the *razo* into a ridiculous tale, in which Peire, in order to gain access to the castle where his lady resides, dresses himself in a wolf's skin, a disguise so successful that he was hunted by a pack of dogs and seriously mauled. Finally, he is brought, unconscious, to his lady, who, laughing, sends for the doctor.[49]

The 'she-wolf of Peire, Lady Loba de Pennautier, was famous for her beauty and for her love of music and musicians. During her life, the castle of Cabaret was a

[44] Troubadour Manuscript A, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Latin 5232, fol. 95. See cover illustration.

[45] Jeanroy, *La Poésie lyrique des troubadours*, I, 113.

[46] Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal*, pp. 146–49.

[47] The most typical feature of the fool's clothing was its eccentricity (Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest*, p. 174).

[48] See, for example, *Peire Vidal: Poesie,* ed. by Avalle, I, 151 and II, 65.

[49] 'Razo C', in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, pp. 368–69.

major pole of attraction for troubadours. While married to Jourdain, lord of Cabaret, she is said to have had relationships with other men, for example, the Count of Foix. Despite the fact that the name Loba is found in a thirteenth-century document as a real woman's name,[50] her reputation reminds us of the connotations attached to the antique meaning of the notion of the she-wolf: 'a woman of loose morals'.[51] In Roman mythology, *Lupa* (or *Acca La(u)rentia*) adopted Romulus and Remus, nursing them while they were infants. The word *lupa* meant she-wolf in Latin, but it was sometimes used in the sense of 'prostitute'. Therefore *lupanaria* came to signify the place where prostitution occurred, a bawdy house. There are plenty of references to this in Latin literature.[52] Ovid's works were especially well known among the medieval audience. *Grosso modo*, the Roman cultural heritage was better assimilated into the medieval Occitan culture than into the culture of northern France. We might assume therefore that the antique meaning of *lupa* could have been conserved in Old Occitan folklore or collective memory.

Gabriel Bianciotto interprets the wolf-metaphor in the story of Peire and Loba differently, recognizing some traits of contemporary beliefs about the behaviour of a she-wolf that chooses always the ugliest he-wolf of the pack.[53] It was not Peire that Lady Loba chose but the Count of Foix, one of the most eminent lords of the region. We do not know whether the Count of Foix was ugly or not, though according to Bianciotto's interpretation he might be considered the ugliest. We do

[50] Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal*, p. 92.

[51] I am grateful to Dr Katariina Mustakallio for pointing out the double meaning of the word *lupa* in Roman culture.

[52] For example, 'Accae Larentiae amicae suae nutriendos dedisse, quam mulierem, eo quod pretio corpus sit vulgare solita, lupam dictam. Notum quippe ita appellari mulieres quaestum corpore facientes, unde et eiusmodi loci in quibus hae consistant lupanaria dicta': Sextus Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus: Praecedunt Origo Gentis Romanae* etc., ed. by F. Pichlmayer (1911; repr. Leipzig: Teubner, 1970), pp. 20–21 (It is said that in order to nurture them he gave them to his mistress, Acca Larentia, who was called the she-wolf because she was accustomed to selling her body. It is known indeed that the courtesans who sell themselves have this name and therefore those places where these women stayed were also called 'lupanaria'); Livy, *Historia Romana*, ed. by B. O. Foster, Loeb Classical Library, 14 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919–59; repr. London: Heinemann, 1961), I (1919), 18; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, ed. by P. K. Marshall, 10 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), I, 261–62; Ovide, *Fasti*, ed. by F. Bömer, 2 vols (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1957), I, 138.

[53] Gabriel Bianciotto, 'Na Loba et le plus laid de la meute', in *Mélanges de philologie et de littérature médiévales offerts à Michel Burger*, ed. by Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet and Olivier Collet (Geneva: Droz, 1994), pp. 301–20.

know he was famous for his very blond hair and his immorality,[54] and moral ugliness was often reflected in a physical ugliness. The literary references to the issue are intriguing, but unfortunately there is no Old Occitan material other than the troubadour *vida*.

Because of *razos* like Peire's adventure as a wolf, one wonders to what extent such accounts are supposed to be taken seriously. The figurative language of lyric, the lyric experience, is transformed into prose and into a supposed reality common to biographic texts.[55] Reasons for this transformation can be several, but it can be presumed that these kinds of *razos* are parodies, deliberately mocking the sophisticated and high-flown imagery of 'the biographicality' of other *vida* and *razos*. For some reason, certain troubadours are more openly parodied than others, probably because of the content of their poems or their personality. If biographers were contemporaries with troubadours, as some were (some were apparently troubadours themselves), they had to be confident that the troubadours could bear their mockery; otherwise they took a risk of a conflict. In any case, the parodic or humoristic aspect of troubadour texts has often been neglected by modern researchers whereas aspects of courtly love are exhaustively examined.[56]

In addition to the word-play of Loba's name, there is another vehicle for figurative expression of the correlation between love and folly: the hunt scene provides the skeletal structure of love and lust. The hunt is an often used figure in literature because it is characteristic of both the courtly and the religious didactic traditions and is eminently adaptable to the comic-realistic mode. The lover's pursuit of the lady in the various adventures is often portrayed in terms of the hunt. The conventional hunt of love culminates in the capture and surrender of the beloved.[57] In Peire's biography, the hunt becomes notably comical and uncourtly: the lover is depicted as the hunted and not as the hunter. Moreover, the troubadour in animal disguise comically inverts all the courtly lover's usual virtues — prowess, perseverance, submission, courtliness, and distant love — to the ridiculous features: cowardice, uncontrollability, bestiality, victimization by members of lower social orders (shepherds) and animals. This story, probably the most famous in Peire's legend,

[54] 'Un comte ros', 'Razo' of Raimon de Miraval, in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, pp. 385–88. *Ros* means blond, fair. On the reputation of Count Raimon-Roger of Foix, see *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, p. 391, n. 3.

[55] Poe, 'Vidas and Razos', pp. 185–86.

[56] Bec, *Le Comte de Poitiers, premier troubadour*, p. 27.

[57] Seidenspinner-Núñez, *Allegory of Good Love*, pp. 59–63.

is also testament to how Peire was remembered afterwards: encounters or fights between an animal and a human were considered essential in the fool's performance, since fools were always ready to boast of their bravery, but when put to the test, were shown to be complete cowards.[58] Much of the inherent humour or parody of the adventure derives from reversal: the hunter becomes the hunted and the 'victim' becomes the laughing victor. In addition to the comic incongruity of reversed sexual roles, Loba and the wolf skin serve a potentially didactic function: they substantiate the moral generalization that lust in any guise, whether male or female, is predatory.

The wolf imagery is particularly significant, because, in the medieval tradition. the wolf is usually depicted as a notorious beast: 'lupus raro invenitur bonam significationem habere' (the wolf is rarely found to have positive signification).[59] The procreational habits of wolves, and especially she-wolves, were a common subject in medieval bestiaries and encyclopaedias.[60] The story's setting, the mountain, is not without significance: it offers a link between a savage mind and the wild life of nature. The wolf hunt could not happen in a castle chamber or in a garden. Indeed, fools and madmen were often associated with wanderings in woods and in mountains. This association with nature and animals emphasized the wildness of fools as well as their innocence compared to 'civilized' people. The forest was also an enchanted place where fantastic things could happen. Bestial metaphors and symbols referred to a caste beneath normality which the fool's customary dress (cockscombs and ass's ears) recall. According to cultural historian Anu Korhonen, the identification of fools with animals 'served the need to distinguish between the human and the bestial and also by defining the bestial qualities inherent in all men'.[61] This bestiality was closely related to sexuality, but sexuality was in general not expressed directly. The poetic ambiguity utilized by troubadours relied on various figurative expressions (metaphors, metonyms, euphemisms, and other hermetic expressions) as devices to disguise the representation of real or imagined sexual activities. Sublimating metaphorically or in other ways the erotic register becomes an art in itself.[62]

[58] Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest*, p. 291.

[59] Hrabanus Maurus, *De Universo*, bk 22, in *PL*, 111 (1852), p. 223.

[60] Bianciotto, 'Na Loba et le plus laid de la meute', pp. 304–19.

[61] Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest*, pp. 132–33.

[62] Moshe Lazar, 'Fin'amor', in *A Handbook of the Troubadours*, ed. by Akehurst and Davis, pp. 61–100 (p. 83).

In Peire's case, the term *follia* is often associated to (mis)adventures with women, the wife of Viscount Barral and Loba of Pennautier in the first place. There are also several other poems addressed to ladies known by name or by pseudonym like Vierna, Castiat, Estefania, and Raimbauda whose historical personalities are not indisputably identified.[63] In the courtly diction of troubadours, *follia* often signifies transgression behind which is love, which reduces the lover's capacity for reasoning and makes him forgot the virtue of moderation. In this sense, *follia* is often related to daring behaviour.[64] There might be a correlation between the notion of *follia* and the status of *joglar* or that of *cantaire* (singer) who really do not represent the sense but who know how to blend common sense and folly in their poetry and, especially in their case, during the act of performance.[65]

In some normative texts (legal, moral, encyclopaedic), *folia* is clearly related to sexual behaviour: 'Si ta molher o ta sors o ta filha fai *folhia* de son cors, tu no la deves pas antar'[66] (If your wife or your sister or your daughter do foolish things with their bodies, you don't have to respect them) or 'Nuils bisbes ni nulls clergies non deu tener e sa maison neguna femna de cui hom posca aver suspicion de *folia*'[67] (A bishop or a clerk must not keep in his house any woman who can be suspected of debauchery). Nevertheless, to read Peire's love affairs as an instance of *folia* does not fit perfectly, for the majority of those noble women with whom Peire was involved seemed either to be ignorant of his love or to have openly tantalized him. That was, however, part of the game. A courtly chevalier's role — which troubadours adopted in poetic discourse — was oriented to serving the lady and to composing lyrical articulations of wishful and unrequited love. According to the *vida*, Peire exceeded this role believing that he was a womanizer:

[63] See *Peire Vidal: Poesie*, ed. by Avalle, I, 18–21; Hoepffner, *Le Troubadour Peire Vidal*, pp. 81–83 and 92–99; 'Razo C', in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, pp. 368–69.

[64] Glynnis M. Cropp, *Le Vocabulaire courtois des troubadours de l'époque classique* (Geneva: Droz, 1975), pp. 133–38.

[65] Bec, *Le Comte de Poitiers, premier troubadour*, p. 55.

[66] 'Livre de Sydrac', in M. Raynouard, *Lexique roman ou dictionnaire de la langue des troubadours comparée avec les autres langues de L'Europe latine*, 6 vols (Paris: Silvestre, 1836–45; repr., Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1928–29), III, 85. *The Book of Sydrac* was one of the most widely read books of knowledge among the general public. This is attested by more than fifty extant manuscripts containing different vernacular versions of the work (in French, Occitan, Flemish, Italian, and English).

[67] 'Justinian Code', in Raynouard, *Lexique roman ou dictionnaire*, III, 2.

> E si entendia en totas las bonas domnas que vezia e totas las pregava d'amor; e totas li dizion de far e de dir so qu'el volgues. Don el crezia esser drutz de totas e que chascuna moris per el. [...] E l'meiller cavaillier del mon crezia estre e'l plus amatz de donnas.[68]
>
> [And he courted all the noble ladies he saw and asked them all for their love, and they all told him to do and say whatever he wished; and because of that he thought he was the lover of them all and that each one was dying for him. [...] And he thought he was the best knight in the world and the one most loved by ladies.][69]

Conclusion

What makes Peire Vidal such a special character in a strongly hierarchical medieval society is that he cannot be categorized in a particular social group: his birth was not aristocratic, but he was a favourite of aristocratic circles. However, his behaviour was far from traditionally courtly. It was excessive, ridiculous, and spontaneous, but at the same time affective, extrovert, and daring. Actually, rather than social hierarchies, his status was linked to cultural hierarchies. The most important of these was the association with the animal and the sexual sphere. Moreover, Peire had much in common with artificial fools: he seemed to speak with no fixed purpose or aim, for instance. To the artificial fool, as to the troubadour, idle talk was a way to pass the time, to amuse the master and the audience. We do not know how and with what voices and gestures the whimsical life of Peire (or the legend which is left of his life) was performed, but certainly its content responded to the senses of humour of the time.

However, stories were what made the teller interesting. If artificial fools were direct descendants of music-making travelling entertainers, as Korhonen argues,[70] Peire Vidal might have been one among them. His role as a troubadour is not without significance: music offered a natural expression for various emotions, and it was an important element of all kinds of performances and festivities; the fool's singing was, for example, a part of carnival.[71] Furthermore, fools from different groups often expressed themselves through music. It has been demonstrated that Occitan

[68] 'Vida A', in *Biographies des Troubadours*, ed. by Boutière and Schutz, p. 352.

[69] *Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouvères*, ed. by Goldin, p. 350.

[70] Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest*, p. 223.

[71] Jean-Marie Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au moyen âge, XII^e – XIII^e siècles: étude comparée des discours littéraire, médical, juridique et théologique de la folie*, Perspectives littéraires (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), p. 331.

troubadours linked specific poetic genres with certain musical forms believed to produce psychological effects consonant with the principal theme of the genre.[72] Modern musicians performing medieval music have observed that Peire's melodies seem to reflect the jocular, boasting character of their author. The melody transmitted along with the poem *Pos tornatz sui en Proenca* (Since I have come back to Provence), which was probably written on his return to Provence, at the court of Viscount Barral of Marseille after the episode of the stolen kiss, is a good case in point.[73] With regards to his physical appearance and his mental condition, if his gullibility is discounted, there is no visible or explicitly expressed deviance, such as slowness or idiocy. On the contrary, the innovative level of his lyrics leads to the conclusion that the *follia* of Peire might have been employed as a tool of social advancement or at least as a tool of his profession. His *follias* served as suitable occasions for laughter and spectacle in the social context of the court by inviting reflection upon society's norms as well as an emotive context to conversations. Laughing at someone else's errors, their lack of intelligence, or their unfortunate circumstances grants both a sense of superiority and a common experience to a group. In this sense, deviant behavior (*follias*) can promote social unity in the courtly world.[74] If this is the case, Peire has been capable of capitalizing on his natural deficiencies which seem to have been, at least in part, responsible for his style of production and reputation as well as for the fact that he chose entertaining as a career.

It is possible that he might have had unattained erotic hopes (which he expressed more or less publicly in forms of certain *follias*), but it is also plausible that, as a professional entertainer, he adopted the comic role of the unfortunate womanizer, as a kind of ridiculous ladies' man. Still, it is more than probable that biographers consciously emphasized that trait, which made him and his compositions even more interesting. The power of the *vidas* and *razos* in determining a troubadour's reputation is a known fact. The scribes of the mid-thirteenth century who

[72] Elizabeth Aubrey, 'Genre as a Determinant of Melody in the Songs of the Troubadours and Trouvères', in *Medieval Lyric: Genres in Historical Context*, ed. by William D. Paden (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 273–96.

[73] Joel Cohen and Pierre Bec, *Lo Gai Saber* (Coaraze: [n.pub.], 2001), p. 5.

[74] Poorly controlled emotions, extreme vitality, and joy of living along with past mental and physical suffering are attested as typical behaviour patterns and characteristics of composers of any time. Paul R. Farnsworth has collected behaviour patterns, sociological conditions, and cultural factors typical to composers of later times. Farnsworth's list is cited in Robert W. Lundin, *An Objective Psychology of Music* (Malabar: Robert E. Krieger, 1985), p. 215.

compiled the earliest anthologies of troubadour songs tend to put the top-rated troubadours at the head of the collections of songs. In their work, scribes trusted more the authority of the *vidas* than their own judgement.[75] Peire Vidal was a renowned troubadour, but the dramatic or humourous introductions to his songs, *vidas* and *razos*, have certainly increased the interest of the audience and helped the preservation of his poetry to later generations. In general, the commemoration of troubadours in the weft of medieval literature as well as in later times is strongly related to the *vidas*. In any case, Peire Vidal appears as a new kind of troubadour, who combined the demands of the courtly singer with the role of a type of court fool. In the dual role of troubadour and fool, Peire lives out an extended role of medieval entertainer.

[75] Poe, 'Vidas and Razos', p. 185.

An Anglo-Norman Fool in Constantinople: *Der Pfaffe Amis*

Cordula Böcking-Politis

Der Pfaffe Amis (written between 1220 and 1250) is a collection of farcical tales by the thirteenth-century Middle High German poet known as Der Stricker. It occupies a unique position in German vernacular literature of the time since it was the only farce collection until the fifteenth century that was marked both by unity of time and place and by the coherence which a single protagonist provides; as such, it may qualify as an early example of the farce novel.

Traditionally, criticism of *Der Pfaffe Amis* has been strongly biased towards the socio-economic relevance of the text, investigating, for example, its treatment of the phenomenon of *Bürgertum* (bourgeoisie) in medieval Germany.[1] More recently, the place of *Der Pfaffe Amis* in the genre of farce has entered the debate, with emphasis being placed on the protagonist's role as trickster or prankster.[2] However, the significance of the text as an ingenious sample of fools' literature and

[1] See, for example, Thomas Cramer, 'Normenkonflikt im *Pfaffen Amis* und im *Willehalm von Wenden*: Überlegungen zur Entwicklung des Bürgertums im Spätmittelalter', in *Spätmittelalterliche Epik,* special issue, *ZfdPh*, 93 (1974), 124–40; Ursula Peters, 'Stadt, "Bürgertum" und Literatur im 13. Jahrhundert: Probleme einer sozialgeschichtlichen Deutung des *Pfaffen Amis*', *Zeitschrift für Linguistik und Literaturwissenschaft*, 7 (1977), 109–26; Barbara Haupt, '*Der Pfaffe Amis* und *Ulenspiegel*: Variationen zu einem vorgegebenen Thema', in *Till Eulenspiegel in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by Thomas Cramer (Bern: Peter Lang, 1978), pp. 61–91.

[2] Werner Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen: Studien zu einer Poetik des deutschen Schwankromans im Spätmittelalter*, Forschungen zur Geschichte der älteren deutschen Literatur, 6 (Munich: Fink, 1987), pp. 37–84; Alison Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters: Roguery in French and German Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Internationale Forschungen zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, 49 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 63–76.

the precise nature of Amis's folly have not been considered exhaustively. Furthermore, the significance of Constantinople as the locale of the climactic episodes of the story has not been examined, neither in general nor, more specifically, in its implications for the protagonist's fool-like activities. My aim, therefore, is twofold: first, to provide an analysis of the 'foolishness' of the protagonist, be it manifest in qualities, acts, or gestures, by examining the peculiar representation of the fool figure and his performances in selected episodes of the text; and second, to investigate the relevance of Constantinople as a location for Amis's follies. Focusing on the Constantinople-based episodes, the paper posits a particular relation between the thirteenth-century text and historical events of the time, which in turn affords the comical aspect present in the narrative a more serious subtext. This engages with another trend in current *Amis* criticism, which is concerned with the question of ambivalence in this work, debating whether the narrator's stance should ultimately be seen as conciliatory or disillusioned, and how the entertainment provided by the text is linked to didactic intentions on the part of the author.[3]

In the following, I examine Amis's performances in the two Constantinople-based episodes. After a brief introduction of Amis's background, I will consider him as a fool figure, focusing in particular on the physical and psychological impact of Amis on his victims. How do his appearance and gestures fit the image of the typical medieval and early modern fool, who is commonly recognized by attributes such as nakedness or colourful costume and by behaviour that ostensibly transgresses all rules of acceptable conduct? What are the methods used to undermine existing mores and indeed bring the fool's message across? I argue that Amis's performances as fool are characterized initially by inconspicuousness and subsequently by his absence from the scene of his victims, to the extent that he delegates acts of a violent nature to the dupes themselves. As we shall see, this absence means that attempts to account for the protagonist's foolishness by analysing his appearances under the category of 'gesture' turn out to be mostly in vain, which in itself may be regarded as a significant insight into the nature of this particular fool. Finally, I will investigate the juxtaposition of the Anglo-Norman extraction of the protagonist and the Constantinopolitan locale of his activities. What is the significance of this geographical extension, which notably is not contained in *Till Eulenspiegel*, a piece of fools' literature that was inspired by *Pfaffe Amis*? With a view to the historical

[3] See, for example, Stephen Wailes, 'The Ambivalence of Der Stricker's *Der Pfaffe Amis*', *Monatshefte*, 90 (1998), 148–60; Michael Schilling, 'Nachwort', in *Der Stricker*, *Der Pfaffe Amis*, ed. and trans. by Michael Schilling (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), pp. 177–206. See also Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen*, pp. 80–84.

background, I will ask whether Der Stricker employs this geographical pattern in order to make a case for the moral superiority of West over East or whether such superiority turns out to be a mere illusion to be replaced by a more realistic account of an ethical deficiency that is universal.

Amis's Beginnings

The narrator situates Amis's exploits in an unspecified past, but geographically he is more specific. He is a priest from *engelnlant* (England), a location which, with his French name, suggests he is of Anglo-Norman extraction:[4]

> Nun saget uns der Stricker,
> wer der erste man wer,
> der liegen triegen anevienc,
> und wie sin wille fur gienc,
> daz er niht widersazzes vant.
> Er het haus in engelnlant
> in einer stat, die hiez zu Trameys,
> und hiez der pfaffe Ameis. (lines 39–46)[5]
>
> [The Stricker will now tell us
> who was the first man
> to bring lying and cheating into the world,
> and how he was able to carry out his will
> without meeting any resistance.
> He had a house in England
> in a town called Tramis
> and was called Priest Amis.]

The narrator introduces Amis as the first person to bring lies and deceit into the world, a world, albeit, that succumbs to this perverted state all too easily. As if this was not infamy enough, the additional detail that Amis is a priest, a somewhat unusual day-job for a deceitful fool, provides yet more scandal.[6] The audience's

[4] Historical context would support this: following the Norman Conquest, many church sees and bishoprics in England came to be held by Normans rather than native Englishmen.

[5] All quotations are taken from *Der Stricker*, *Der Pfaffe Amis*, ed. and trans. by Schilling, which follows the vulgate version as transmitted by the Heidelberg manuscript, cpg 341. English translations of *Der Pfaffe Amis* are my own.

[6] For a general discussion of the medieval and early modern figure of the trickster priest, see Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters*, pp. 49–83.

expectations are confounded further when it is revealed that the impetus for Amis's scheming exploits lies in his great generosity (*milte*). His boundless hospitality having reduced him to financial ruin, he is determined to acquire *guot*, to amass a new fortune on the road so as to be able to resume his former kindness to others. In order to achieve this aim, he engages in deceit on an ever-increasing scale. As a crucial part of this process, he exploits, then subsequently exposes, those lies that are shown to be fundamental to society. Amis provokes his fellow humans by undermining established conventions and exposes the false and brittle nature of social mores. In this way the protagonist is indeed a prime example of a medieval fool, if we take 'fool' to mean one who subverts convention or orthodoxy or diverges from social conformity in order to reveal spiritual or moral truth.

Amis's adventures take him from the familiar pastures of his hometown across England to Paris, Lotharingia, and other regions of France, until he finally travels to Constantinople. It is in Constantinople that he pulls off the greatest scam of his life, and the two episodes set there therefore occupy a climactic place in the narrative.

The First Constantinople Episode: The Mason as Bishop (lines 1315–1818)

The second half of the narrative takes the protagonist to the easternmost reaches of Europe. Having failed to find a permanent solution to his financial shortfalls in various Western European locations, Amis decides to try his luck in Constantinople. He is attracted by the proverbial riches of this city, which were in fact a common topos in the Middle Ages:

> Nu sprach die werlt gemeine,
> ouch gedacht er in sinem mute
> von dem grozen gute,
> daz zu Konstenopel sei:
> 'Da wird ich immer sorgen vrei.' (lines 1372–76)
>
> [Now all the world was talking —
> and he, too, was thinking to himself —
> about the enormous wealth
> that existed in Constantinople:
> 'There I will be free of my worries forever.']

Having travelled East in the guise of a merchant, Amis soon settles on his first victim, the owner of a silk store selling materials of exceeding worth. He accomplishes his deceit with the unwitting support of a fellow Westerner. Amis chances upon a bald mason, who introduces himself as a Frank (line 1407) unable to communicate in Greek:

Er sprach: 'Ich bin ein Franke.
Ez ist mir wol zu danke,
daz ich ewer sprache han vernumen.
Wie ich in ditz lant bin kumen,
daz schuf ein wunderlich geschicht.
Nu kann ich der sprache niht.' (lines 1407–12)

[He said: 'I am a Frank.
I am pleased
to have heard your language.
How I ended up in this country
is due to a strange concatenation of events.
However, I do not speak the language.']

Amis and the mason speak the same language; what is more, the priest addresses the Frank as *lantman* ('countryman'; line 1437) whose country of origin he shares ('Ir sit mir liber durch daz lant, | danne wir beide sin geborn', lines 1440–41; 'I like you even better because of the country | in which both of us were born'), suggesting further Amis's own Norman ancestry. Pretending to be convinced that the mason's bald head predisposes him to the role of an ecclesiastical dignitary, he persuades the man that it is in his power to make him bishop on condition that the Frank utter no words other than 'that is true' in the course of his new career. Here we may observe an example of how Der Stricker points up society's superficial notions of honour and spiritual worth: Amis flatters the mason by claiming 'Ir sit ze bisschof wol gestalt' (line 1466; 'You look just like a bishop'). This statement, which assumes that appearance is a decisive criterion in choosing a bishop, is reduced to further absurdity when it becomes clear that what Amis actually refers to is the mason's bald head rather than, for example, the 'pious' nobility of his features. In this sense, the author, and indeed his fool, are pointing up as ridiculous the notion that external signs may signify inner truths.

Amis has the would-be cleric accompany him to the silk store where he pretends to be the bishop's treasurer and negotiates a deal on his behalf. Awed by the presence of the allegedly rich and powerful clergyman and enticed by the prospect of the sale of a lifetime, the shop owner lets himself be talked into parting with his entire stock. In lieu of payment, Amis leaves him the false bishop as a guarantee and escapes town unhindered with his valuable booty.

At this point, Amis's physical presence ends, and in what follows the two victims come to grasp the full extent of his deceit. Having entertained the bishop/mason for several days at considerable expense, the shop owner begins to understand that the money is not forthcoming. He questions his guest about the return of the 'treasurer'; when he fails to get a satisfying answer and realizes his loss, he resorts to violence. There follows a passage which has become famous for its

seemingly inconsistent detail.[7] In an angry, punishing gesture, we are told the shop owner grabs the supposedly bald impostor by the hair (line 1694), throws him to the floor, pulls out his hair, and beats him to a pulp:

> Mit zorn er do dar gienc.
> Bi dem har er in gevienc.
> Er warf in zorniclichen nider.
> Do sprach er anders niht wider
> wan: 'Ez ist war! Ez ist war!'
> Do er im hut unde har
> abgesluck und gebrach,
> do rief er alles unde sprach:
> 'Ez ist war! Ez ist war!' [...]
> Er het im vil nach enzwei
> houbt unde bein geslagen. (lines 1693–1705)
>
> [He went up to him full of anger.
> He grabbed him by the hair
> and threw him fiercely to the ground.
> There was no other reply
> except: 'It is true! It is true!'
> As he was beating the bishop's skin
> and tearing out his hair,
> the latter kept shouting:
> 'It is true! It is true!' [...]
> He came close to breaking
> his skull and bones.]

The shop owner's violent expression of anger, which is inconsistent with the physiological details provided earlier, is of general interest for the representation and significance of gesture in medieval texts. With the absence of the trickster, the false bishop has the position of trickster-fool imposed upon him, and the foolish gesture is deflected from the actual trickster-fool. Both the mason and the silk merchant find themselves at the receiving end of the attack initiated by the now absent fool. The mason has to bear most of the physical attack, while the store owner is inflicted with great material losses. Both suffer psychologically when they realize that their trust has been violated and that a mockery has been made of their ambitions (e.g. lines 1791–95; lines 1800–01).

So what exactly is the fool's role in this episode? Amis is not externally recognizable as a fool to his fellow characters. Wearing merchant's clothing when first investigating the silk store's stock, and later his clerical robe when with the 'bishop',

[7] Cf. *Der Stricker*, *Der Pfaffe Amis*, ed. and trans. by Schilling, p. 192.

he manages to shift roles seamlessly, as he looks the part that the scenario requires. The same goes for his behaviour, which is completely inconspicuous: he knows precisely how to interact with both mason and shop owner so as to avoid their noticing the slightest incongruity in his pretence. The trickery, when it takes full effect, is profoundly serious, indeed regularly characterized by violence; but it takes effect in the absence of its instigator. Amis's genius as a fool lies in delegating any acts of violence to his victims. By anticipating the patterns of their behaviour and their mutual responses and reactions, he is able to direct them, as it were, from afar. What is more, Amis succeeds in concealing his deceitful part by cleverly using to his advantage the mason's ignorance of the Greek language spoken in Constantinople. His victims never establish clearly his role in the deceit, and they are left to draw their own lesson from the events. All of this suggests that rather than being predicated on gesture, Amis's foolishness is intellectualized, taking as it does the shape of mind games rather than concrete physical manifestations on his part. This ties in with the fact that there is no laughter in the passages under consideration: the only sounds described are those produced by anger and pain, while utterances of mirth are not included on the textual level.

Amis's manoeuvres work because his victims are themselves implicated in deceit and far from innocent. The shop owner is prompted to agree to the deal by his excessive greed, which conflates implicit suppositions about religious matters ('a bishop will not lie') with the expectation of gaining material profit. He is revealed as himself dishonest when his weights are found to measure twelve marks for eleven (lines 1613–15). The impoverished mason, driven by a blind desire for worldly honours and the possessions that go with them, is vulnerable to Amis's promises: he views religious promotion as a convenient means to that end. Seen in this way, the fool utters only false assurances, and it is down to his gullible victims to induce the ruinous consequences. It is their own flawed motives that lead them to act on these assumptions without verification. Because they are all too willing to see Amis's lies become truths they turn into their own tormentors, thus to a considerable degree exonerating the fool. This may imply a positive didactic message, as deduced by Williams in her analysis of trickster priests:

> Any moral condemnation of a blasphemous use of religious faith by trickster priests is deflected by transferring some of the responsibility for the deception onto victims who are either corrupt themselves, or who enthusiastically interpret sleight of hand as a holy miracle. Their deception therefore takes on a positive didactic role which is sometimes recognized within the text, but is always apparent to the audience.[8]

[8] Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters*, p. 83.

The Second Constantinople Episode: The Jeweller (lines 1819–2244)

Having safely escaped to his native England, Amis is drawn to Constantinople a second time. Disguising himself as a trader, he meets a rich merchant who specializes in jewels and precious stones. Amis soon strikes a deal with the merchant and persuades the Constantinopolitan, in return for a small premium, to take his entire stock to his lodgings in order to settle the payment there. On entering the quarters, the merchant is attacked, bound, and gagged by the Anglo-Norman's servants, while Amis proceeds to load his ship with the goods and escapes once more. Before disappearing, however, Amis takes care of the merchant in his own peculiar way. He seeks out a native doctor and pretends to seek treatment for his insane father, whom he claims he has had to restrain in order to silence his incessant cries for outstanding payments. The doctor agrees to see the patient, confirms Amis's suggestion that the jeweller is mentally deranged, and asks him to return in the morning with a hefty fee for the treatment. This may be seen as a further example of how Amis exploits and simultaneously questions conventional notions of external signifiers. To the uninitiated, the jewellery merchant's distraught appearance and behaviour seem to fulfil the criteria of mental illness — the doctor misreads the 'patient's' frantic protestations of sanity as gestures indicating madness. Amis brings the jeweller into a situation where his behaviour will be open to misinterpretation as foolish, and Amis verbally suggests this interpretation to the doctor.

At this point, Amis exits the scene and is absent when the true extent of his betrayal is revealed. It is when his victims are left to their own devices that violence erupts and the fool's attack becomes manifest on both a physical and a psychological level. The jeweller is forced by the doctor to undress and spend the night in a steam bath, which is so overheated that he nearly suffers burns. Against his vehement protestations the medic then shaves his head and punctures his scalp. Yet this physical suffering pales into insignificance when compared to the psychological distress the merchant comes to experience. He is utterly humiliated by his powerlessness, having to 'liden als ein kint | allez, daz er im getet' (lines 2134–35; 'suffer like a child | all that he [the physician] did to him'), since nothing can stop the physician from carrying out his brutal 'treatment'. Finally, the merchant is forced to renounce his financial claim when the doctor threatens him with even harsher measures. Satisfied with this result, the latter demands payment, but on finding out that Amis has left town sets about blinding the merchant in place of the trickster. Although the merchant is able to avert this fate by paying for the treatment himself, he has experienced irrevocable loss of honour, and this leaves him with psychological scars to last a lifetime (see lines 2232–36).

Looking at the fool's machinations in this sequence of events, it is notable that Amis again acts entirely inconspicuously while present and is far removed from the scene of the crime by the time things start to take a violent turn. His deceit is so effective because, once more, he succeeds in playing his two victims off against one another. The merchant and the doctor are far from innocent themselves. The merchant's greed leads to his humiliation: the narrator remarks that, motivated by the prospect of a quick sale and a two-mark premium, the man becomes a monkey ('Sust schuf er, daz ein affe | uz einem manne wart', lines 1952–53; 'Thus he caused a man to turn into a monkey') and foregoes what would be reasonable safety procedures for a man of his trade. The doctor, who equally falls prey to the priest's scheming, even though he emerges relatively unharmed on a material level, is more interested in boosting his earnings than in delivering a thorough diagnosis. He clings to the idea that the merchant is a madman, and this idea is sustained by certain expressions of the merchant's behaviour that Amis had cleverly anticipated. Ultimately, the fool's success hinges on the fact that his victims' flawed characters cause them, blind to the truth, to act upon preconceptions. As before, no explicit moral is imparted by the fool and the dupes must realize their wrongdoings through reflecting upon their own responsibility.

From this episode, too, Amis emerges as a fool who delegates. As a result, manifestations of gesture that could contribute towards the characterization of the fool are sparse; instead we must take note of certain qualities such as the ability to manipulate from afar as being characteristic of this particular brand of foolery. Amis lets others, first his servants and then, more importantly, his victims themselves, perform the most noticeably illicit part of his scheme for him. As his victims will resort to violence out of their own initiative, it is not necessary for Amis to do so. He is a mere catalyst for their depraved behaviour, and this distinguishes him from the early modern Till Eulenspiegel. This reveals the perverted nature of the society Amis finds himself in and in turn draws the attention away from his guilt and towards the guilt and gullibility of others.

The Nature of the Fool and his Follies

Amis's performance as fool is distinguished by the fact that he refrains from any obvious transgressions of good conduct. He remains removed from acts of physical violence, instead delegating his victims to carry these out, and hence he operates mainly on a psychological level. It is a further characteristic of Amis's modus operandi that, at least in the Constantinople episodes, his victims are left to make their

own deductions as to who or what is to blame for their suffering. While there is a moral lesson to be learnt from his exploits, Amis does not utter it to the afflicted and thus may once more be said to delegate. As a result of the implicit nature of his moral teachings (if indeed we may call them that), members of the audience potentially have greater awareness than the characters and superior knowledge, which may allow them to feel a degree of complicity with the protagonist.

Amis is an unusual fool in that he ostensibly neither looks nor acts like one. He does not stand out, but blends in. In spite of his being a man of the Church, he is well versed in the ways of the world, and it is because of this quality that he ultimately manages to carry out deception on as grand a scale as he does. This is all the more remarkable since, as a Westerner in Constantinople, he operates in a culture that is far removed from his own, although one could argue that certain attributes such as greed simply prove to be universal. Amis's success lies in his ability to tap into certain apparently preprogrammed modes of thought and action on the part of his victims and to create illusions that feed on their credulity. This makes him both a con man of the highest order and an extremely sophisticated fool who is able to point up not only moral but also psychological flaws that are an integral part of society.

The Significance of Constantinople as Location

While to the protagonist Constantinople signifies the greatest accumulation of riches in the known world, to the audience it also would have been the easternmost extension of the Christian orbit, the place where West meets East, where the Orient begins. Three hundred years after its first appearance, Der Stricker's tales inspired the creation of an early modern fool, Hermann Bote's *Till Eulenspiegel*. Bote transposes Till's adventures, some of which follow *Pfaffe Amis* almost to the letter, to a more domestic arena, which covers several locations in Germany and notably does not include Constantinople. What, then, could the significance of Constantinople have been for Der Stricker? Why did he choose it as the locale for the climactic episodes in Amis's career as a trickster before the protagonist's return to England where he supposedly reverts to a virtuous life? On first sight, Amis's success in Constantinople may simply serve to reinforce the geographical range of his intellectual superiority. In the context of the narrative as a whole, Amis is shown to have the ability to deceive not only people from all groups of society, from both rural and urban backgrounds, but also the inhabitants of East and West alike.

However, the choice of Constantinople as a locale may point to a more complex issue than the mere illustration of the protagonist's all-round success.[9] This becomes clear when we consider the historical situation in the early thirteenth century. The year 1204 saw the Sack of Constantinople as part of the Fourth Crusade. The crusaders initially set out to recapture Jerusalem. The diversion to Constantinople occurred as the result of a sequence of events that started because the northern French crusaders had done a deal with the Venetians to get a fleet to take them to the Holy Land. When it turned out that the French could not pay for the fleet, the Venetians aimed to get their money back. At this time a pretender to the throne of Constantinople arrived on the scene to make an offer. He promised the crusaders money and soldiers to help with their undertaking on condition that they would put him on the throne. Once they returned him to the Eastern capital, it emerged that he was unable to pay but would get others to do it for him. But his people in Constantinople resented the interfering Westerners, killing the pretender and refusing payment. As a result of this betrayal, the crusaders found themselves friendless and with no money and so went on to break into Constantinople, wreaking wanton destruction and violence, taking the treasures of the Orthodox church, most notably from the great Hagia Sophia, in the process.

These historical events are characterized by patterns that to some extent clearly parallel Amis's machinations in Constantinople. The historical events, like the literary scenario, are marked by people being lured by ambition and greed, by false promises breeding discontent and lapsing into violence. On a historical level, the patterns of deceiving and being deceived are present in the behaviour of both Westerners and Easterners. This ties in with the fictional situation, in which Amis deceives not only native Constantinopolitans, but also a Frank, the mason, who, having arrived in the capital through a strange sequence of events (lines 1410–11), may be seen to embody the nation of the conquerors. Side by side with Eastern and

[9] The peculiar geographical constellation of Anglo-Norman/French characters demonstrating their superiority over Constantinopolitans in a morally questionable way is reminiscent of the Old French *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*. In this text, the oldest written version of which dates from about 1140, elements of *chanson de geste* and satire are combined as the Frankish king Charlemagne travels to Constantinople spurred on by rivalry with the fictional Byzantine emperor Hugo. Charlemagne eventually wins victory over Hugo, but does so in a manner that sees him far removed from the heroic figure of poems such as the *Chanson de Roland*. After a Byzantine spy has overheard the Frankish King and his twelve peers brag about their extraordinary abilities, ranging from sexual prowess to artistic performances, they have no choice but to demonstrate these skills in front of the Emperor. Thanks to earnestly invoked divine support, they emerge triumphant and as a result the Constantinopolitan ruler takes a vow to become Charlemagne's vassal.

Western victims of deceit, Der Stricker depicts perpetrators of occidental and oriental provenance. The fraudulent Frank and the mischievous priest, whose actions illustrate the questionable morals of those from the West, complement the deceitful Constantinopolitan silk-store owner, jeweller, and doctor. It seems highly plausible that Der Stricker's negative portrayal of representatives of each side, in their greed and gullibility, could have been inspired or influenced by the historical situation which arose in temporal proximity to this work and which had disastrous consequences for both parties. Of special interest in this context is the mason-as-bishop episode because it exemplifies the amalgamation of religion and profit-seeking so essential to the crusaders' endeavours. Thus this episode can be seen to reflect on a small scale the motives of the conquerors and their opponents in a way that is all the more poignant since the Anglo-Norman extraction of the priest and the Frankish origin of the mason in a German text link both fictitious Westerners to the French crusaders of historical events.[10] The episode highlights the dubious and dangerous ways in which the trappings of religious institutions may be used to material advantage. It does so in a manner that is all the more pertinent since the ultimate deceit originates from an actual man of the Church, and this at a time when, although the (Roman Catholic) crusaders had violated other (Greek Orthodox) Christians, they generally were not condemned by European society, and Pope Innocent III even removed the ban that had excommunicated them. Moreover, the equanimity with which Der Stricker treats the flawed morals of his Eastern and Western characters suggests that any notion of a moral hierarchy between East and West must be viewed as illusory. This balanced representation of moral deficiency is reinforced when we consider that even England, to which Amis retires to live a virtuous life, is inhabited by morally flawed people who had fallen prey to the priest's deceptions previously.

That Der Stricker was very much aware of the devastating situation brought about by the Sack of Constantinople is confirmed elsewhere in his poetic work, namely in the short speech *Von Edelsteinen* (*On Gems*; No. 127). This polemic has as its subject the questionable worth of precious stones. The false security which some people mistakenly attribute to gems is attacked in passages such as the following:

[10] It may be worth noting that around the time at which *Der Pfaffe Amis* was written, England was losing its territories on the continent; indeed Normandy was lost to France in 1204. However, the question of whether and to what extent Der Stricker's representation of the English or the Anglo-Norman, not least with a view to the interaction between the Anglo-Norman Amis and the Frank, was shaped by these historical events remains open to debate.

ich han von sagen vernomen,
es si der stein, swer in habe,
sin gu(o)t genem nimmer abe.
daz muz mir gar ein luge sin.
daz wart *ze chunstnopel* schin.
da het man algemeine
aller der hande steine,
die ze deheinem lobe warn chomen,
und wart in doch ir gut genomen.
mohten steine sælde geben,
si heten ir gut und ir leben
niht verlorn und alle ir ere. (*Von Edelsteinen*, lines 64–75; my emphasis)[11]

[I have heard people say
there is a gem such that whoever possesses it
will never see his wealth decrease.
That has got to be a lie as far as I am concerned.
This became apparent at Constantinople.
There people had between them
all kinds of gems,
which were not to be praised in any way
because their possessions were taken from them.
If precious stones were able to grant happiness,
they would not have lost their possessions and their life
and all their respectability.] (my translation)

Here, Der Stricker poignantly refers to the suffering experienced by the inhabitants of Constantinople ('chunstnopel', line 68). He recounts how, in spite of their great wealth, people lost their possessions, worldly honours, and even their lives (lines 74–75). This amounts to a warning that material riches do not guarantee happiness and that striving for them at all costs is therefore futile, a theme that resonates with the experience of the priest's victims in the narrative text. In effect, Der Stricker is using the events in Constantinople as an 'exemplum', a historical

[11] *Die Kleindichtung des Strickers*, ed. by Wolfgang Wilfried Moelleken, Gayle Agler-Beck, and Robert E. Lewis, 5 vols, GAG, 107 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1973–78), IV (1977). I have ignored italicization here. Hans-Joachim Ziegeler states: 'Einen Terminus post quem [für die Datierung der Strickerschen Werke] bieten die Anspielungen in der in [Hs.] A erhaltenen polemischen Rede gegen die "Edelsteine" (A 136/H 179) auf die Eroberung Konstantinopels (1203/04)' (The allusions to the conquest of Constantinople that are contained in the polemic against the 'gems' preserved in '[MS] A' provide a terminus post quem for dating Der Stricker's works). See Hans-Joachim Ziegeler, 'Der Stricker', in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, vol. IX, ed. by Burghart Wachinger and others (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), col. 433.

occurrence with which to make a moral point. The potent reference to these events is all the more intriguing since the motif of the gems and their inadequacy in protecting their owner from ruin echoes the scenario of the jeweller episode in *Der Pfaffe Amis*.

In conclusion, Amis's presence in Constantinople serves the following purposes: it illustrates the sophistication of his folly through his ability to operate in a foreign culture; it depicts the geographical extent of his deceit, which spans Europe in its entirety from West to East; and it indicates the ubiquity of depravity and the universal nature of greed and stupidity by demonstrating how the psychological mechanisms utilized are universally applicable. Finally, when viewed against the background of historical events, the choice of location implies the presence of a very serious subtext, in which the human weaknesses attacked by the fool Amis have consequences that may be only too real. Three hundred years later, these historical events were no longer of immediate relevance, which may have been why Bote's Till Eulenspiegel never made it as far as the Eastern capital. The literary implications of the specific relevance of contemporary thirteenth-century politics emerge also from Williams's observations on Der Stricker's depiction of Amis's age as one of declining values, in which the trickster himself has been affected by the loss of moral standards and therefore poses a threat to society:

> The characterization of a historical period as dominated by disorder evidently has implications for an examination of how the rituals of carnival are reflected in literature. If disorder has spread beyond the ritualized confines of carnival celebration, it changes from being a benign force which merely plays with the established order to become a much more serious challenge to society.[12]

An analogy might be made between disorder spreading from the ritualized arena of carnival to society more widely and the violence implicated in a trickster's gestures being moved from the trickster himself to his victims. Violence thus spreads beyond the ritual.

While I have left aside here the relation between the Constantinople episodes and the remainder of *Der Pfaffe Amis*, it is clear that the two climactic episodes, through the choice of location, supply the whole narrative, for all its farcical elements, with an underlying sense of earnestness that becomes evident only if we take into account the historical perspective. This provides a new angle to Röcke's interpretation of *Pfaffe Amis*, which identifies Der Stricker's attempt 'to paint the world's depravity in the darkest of colours' ('Strickers Absicht, die Verworfenheit

[12] Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters*, p. 64.

der Welt in den dunkelsten Farben [...] zu malen')[13] as central to his narrative undertaking. Further acknowledging the historical significance of the Constantinople-based events substantiates the reading by Wailes in his investigation of the ambivalence of the text:

> the weight of the evidence of narrator's comments and plot development shows that the author is not himself ambivalent about his story. By shaping this and its mediation by his narrator, he gently but firmly urges his audience toward a serious reading.[14]

For Der Stricker, earnest ultimately prevails over entertainment.

[13] Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen*, p. 80.

[14] Wailes, 'Ambivalence of Der Stricker', p. 158.

Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* and its Woodcuts

Siegrid Schmidt

In the last fifteen years there has been an increasing interest in the humanities in the relationship between word and image in literature. During the Middle Ages there was a significant tradition of uniting word and image. Medieval manuscripts may include illustrations or illuminations which perform a variety of functions. For example, in the *Heidelberger Liederhandschrift*, the well-known manuscript of songs, there are miniatures of the 'Minnesänger', the songwriters, showing details related to the themes of the songs or to the situation of their performance. These images both illustrate and provide commentary to the songs themselves. In the Paupers' Bible, the *Armenbibel*, there are pictures which illustrate the idea of the text for the illiterate.[1] In the prestigious *Evangeliar*, a royal gospel-book, Christ is shown together with the king and queen who were the patrons of the work.[2] These sacred manuscripts were not used for sermons during Mass but primarily served a ceremonial and representational function. The functions of images are many, but it is clear that illustrations, pictures, ornaments, illuminated initials, and other graphical signs bring an order to texts and books.

All images reproduced from *Die Holzschnitte zu Sebastian Brant's 'Narrenschiff': 121 Bildtafeln*, ed. by Manfred Lemmer (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag Anton Kippenberg, 1964; repr. 1994), with the permission of Insel-Verlag Anton Kippenberg, Leipzig.

[1] For example, *Die Salzburger Armenbibel: Biblia pauperum: Cod. a IX 12 aus der Erzabtei St. Peter*, ed. by Karl Forstner (Salzburg: Pustet, 1983).

[2] The *Evangeliar* was an artefact of kingship: a very valuable book, written and illuminated partly with gold. The twelfth-century *Evangeliar* of Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony, is particularly famous.

My subject takes me to a period when media were changing, when handwritten manuscripts were gradually disappearing and the new technique of printing was on the rise, increasing possibilities for producing and presenting both text and image. Not only the technical production but also the topics of literature were changing, and the fool was becoming a prominent literary figure. Fools were nearly everywhere: among clerics (*Der Pfaffe vom Kalenberg*, first printed 1473), among town- and country-people (*Ulenspiegel*, first printed 1510/11), and among heroes (*Der hürnen Seyfrid*, first printed 1527, a 'semifool').[3] In the *Das Narrenschiff* (1494), *The Ship of Fools*, Sebastian Brant explains that nearly everybody is a fool.[4]

Brant's work consists of 112 poems about all sorts of fools, each poem accompanied by a woodcut illustration, each fool represented by a figure in the woodcuts. The presentation of each poem consists of the poem, the woodcut, a title, and a motto, with an ornamental border. In this paper I explore the connection between text and woodcuts, asking if the form and system of presentation supports a structure. It might be expected that a structure is maintained by the themes of the chapters which would then be represented systematically in the text and in the woodcuts. Or different characterizations of the fools in word and in image might provide structural coherence.

Sebastian Brant's Ship of Fools

Sebastian Brant (1457/58–1521) was a well-educated lawyer. He studied both Canon and Roman law, completing his studies in 1484 at the University of Basel. He became a teacher of law only one year after finishing his dissertation and went on to write juristic and literary texts. His works, of which his most famous are the *Carmines laudem Mariae* and *Das Narrenschiff*, were treated in Johannes Trithemius's *Catalogus illustrium virorum Germaniae* (1495). *The Ship of Fools* was an incredible success, with seventeen authorized editions from 1494 to 1521, not to mention those that were unauthorized. It was translated into Latin and several

[3] 'Der Pfarrer von Kalenberg', in *Narrenbuch*, ed. by Felix Bobertag (1884; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgemeinschaft, 1964), pp. 1–86. Hermann Bote, *Ulenspigel: Ein kurzweiliges Buch von Till Eulenspiegel aus dem Lande Braunschweig. Wie er sein Leben verbracht hat. 96 seiner Geschichten* [1510] (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1978). *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid*, ed. by Siegfried Holzbauer, Ralph Breyer, and Heinz Gappmayr (Klagenfurt: Wieser, 2001).

[4] See 'Preface' in Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff*, Studienausgabe, mit allen 114 Holzschnitten des Drucks Basel 1494 [with all 114 woodcuts of the Basel edition 1494], ed. by Joachim Knape (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005), pp. 107–08.

European languages, including French and English. The reason for this success is much debated. On the one hand it is thought that the book's popularity came from Brant's poetic skill and from his use of the theme of the fool. On the other hand, the quality of the woodcuts, many attributed to Albrecht Dürer, are deemed the most important factor in its success. There has not always been a consensus that Dürer was the 'illustrator' of Brant's fools, but Joachim Knape convincingly demonstrates that this is the case.[5]

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *The Ship of Fools* was read as a mirror of social circumstances in the fifteenth century. Later, its ironic aspects came to be acknowledged. Quoting from wise sayings and writers from the antique and Christian traditions, Brant attacks the folly of his contemporaries. And as Brant points out in his preface, there are not only some fools, but many:

> Ja Schrift und Lehre sind veracht,
> es lebt die Welt in finstrer Nacht
> und tut in Sünd verharren;
> alle Gassen und Straßen sind voll Narren,
> die treiben Torheit an jedem Ort
> [...]
> Drum hab ich gedacht zu dieser Frist,
> wie ich den Narren Schiff' ausrüst:
> [...]
> Es könnt ein Schiff nicht alle tragen,
> die jetzt sind in der Narren Zahl.[6]

[Aye, scripture and doctrine are despised, the world lives in the dark of night and persists in sin; every alley and street is full of fools, who commit foolery everywhere. [...] Thus have I thought at this time how I shall equip the Ship of Fools. [...] One ship could not carry all those who now number among the fools.]

Nobody is excluded; even women are foolish:

> In diesen Spiegel sollen schauen
> die Menschen alle, Männer und Frauen,
> stets eins ich mit dem andren mein:
> Männer sind Narren nit allein,
> auch Närrinnen findet man viel.[7]

[5] Joachim Knape, 'Die Entstehung von Brant "Narrenschiff" in Basel 1494', *Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein Gesellschaft*, 7 (1992–93), 293–303 (pp. 293–95).

[6] Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff*, ed. by Elvira Pradel (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 1979), p. 24. All translations are by Maurice Sprague and Siegrid Schmidt.

[7] Brant, *Das Narrenschiff*, ed. by Pradel, p. 25.

[All people, men and women, should look in this mirror. I always mean one with the other: not only men are fools, one can also find many she-fools.]

Brant depicts the varieties of fools in his 112 poems, for instance young, old, educated, uneducated, rich, poor, Christian, pagan, individuals, groups, and so on. Given this large variety, is there a recognizable system in the poems?

Structures in The Ship of Fools

There have been several attempts to discern the structure for Brant's work. It was sought in the contents and themes of the poems, in motifs, or in linguistic aspects, but in vain. Hans-Joachim Mähl concludes that '*The Ship of Fools* is doubtlessly constructed as a complete work and realized as a cumulative composition that limits itself to a simple, sequential ordering of the chapters'.[8] Aurelius Pompen, who treats the English versions of the text, remarks: 'The principal unifying factor is the idea [...] that all was FOLLY [...]. Another element of unity in the *Ship of Fools*, and the second in importance, are the WOODCUTS.'[9] This seems sensible and I will therefore develop my thesis concerning Brant's structure by considering both elements, folly and the woodcuts.

Structure of the Woodcuts

The woodcuts seem to give an order to the poems. The literary element, which has a corresponding picture and an ornamental border, comprises a motto, a title, and a poem. An example of this combination is *cap*. 2, 'Of Good Advice'. This example is particularly pertinent because its figures are portrayed exactly as they are described. Here we find the motto in three lines:

Wer sich uff gwalt jm radt verloßt
Und henckt sich wo der wint har bloßt
Der selb die suw in kessel stoßt.

[Whoever follows the advice of the powerful and changes according to the blowing of the wind will shove the pig into the cauldron.]

[8] 'Das *Narrenschiff* ist zweifellos als Ganzes entworfen und ausgeführt worden in einem additiven Kompositionsverfahren, das sich auf eine einfache Aneinanderreihung der Kapitel beschränkt': quoted in Holger Eckhardt, *Totentanz im Narrenschiff: Die Rezeption ikonographischer Muster als Schlüssel zu Sebastian Brants Hauptwerk* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1995), p. 36.

[9] Aurelius Pompen, cited in Eckhardt, *Totentanz im Narrenschiff*, p. 34.

Wer ſich vff gwalt jm radt verloßt
Vnd henckt ſich wo der wint har bloßt
Der ſelb die ſuw jnn keſſel ſtoßt
Von guten reten
Vil ſint den iſt dar noch gar not
Wie ſie bald kumen jn den rot
Die doch des rechten nit verſton
Vnd blintlich an den wenden gon

Figure 2. 'Of Good Advice' (*cap*. 2).
Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

In the background of the woodcut below this motto (Figure 2) you can see a castle surrounded by woods and meadows. In the foreground there are two figures. One can be identified by his headdress as a fool; the other seems to be a cleric, but upon closer inspection it is clear that he too wears a fool's cap. They are both forcing a pig into the cauldron, a figure for being a tool of others.[10] So the woodcut illustrates the motto. The poem and the woodcut are framed by ornaments showing plants and climbing fools.

While one may expect that every chapter is constructed in this or a very similar way, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that every single combination shows a great number of varieties. The many relationships between word and image are listed by Silke Mausolf-Kiralp: the image is related to the poem only, or to both title and poem, or to both motto and poem. Where the theme of the poem is so general, the image

[10] Cf. Andreas Bässler, *Sprichwortbild und Sprichwortschwank: Zum illustrativen und narrativen Potential von Metaphern in der deutschsprachigen Literatur um 1500* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003).

may relate to some particular detail of the poem. Where the poem offers no possibility for an illustration, the image is only connected with the motto.[11]

But there are also great differences between the design of the illustrations and the ornaments themselves. In Brant's work a picture is, at times, not just a picture. Sometimes there are other optical or linguistic signs included in a woodcut. For instance *cap.* 24 (Figure 3):

Von zu vil sorg:
Wer aller Welt Sorg uff sich ladt
Und nit gedenckt syn nutz und schad
Der lyd sich/ob er ettwann bad.

Der ist eyn narr/der tragen will
Das jm uffheben ist zu vil
Und der allein will underston
Das er selb dritt nit mocht gethon.

[Of Too Much Worry:
Whoever carries the weight of the world without considering the consequences should not be surprised if he comes a cropper.
He is a fool who wants to carry that which is too much for him and wants to undertake alone that which three men could not accomplish.]

We see a fool carrying a heavy load in the form of what resembles a modern comic-strip speech-bubble. This image within the image, more than the landscape it re-creates, signifies the whole world. Linguistic signs are also to be found in the illustrations (Figure 4):

Von uffschlag suchen:
Wer singt Cras Cras glich wie eyn rapp
Der blibt eyn narr biß jnn syn grapp
Morn hat er noch eyn groesser kapp.

Der ist eyn narr dem gott jn gyt
Das er sich besseren soll noch hüt
Und soll von synen sünden lan
Eyn besser leben vohen an.

[11] 'Das Bild bezieht sich nur auf den Haupttext [...]. Das Bild bezieht sich auf Motto und Text [...]. Das Bild bezieht einzelne Motiv aus dem Haupttext, weil das Motto in seiner Allgemeinformulierung keine direkte Anregung für eine bildliche Umsetzung bietet. Das Generalthema ist jedoch Motto und Text verpflichtet': Silke Mausolf-Kiralp, *Die 'traditio' der Ausgaben des Narrenschiffs von Sebastian Brant mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Straßburger Edition* (Aachen: Shaker-Verlag 1997), p. 73.

Wer aller welt ſorg vff ſich ladt
Vnd nit gedenckt ſyn nutz vnd ſchad
Der lyd ſich/ob er ettwann bad
Von zů vil ſorg.
Der iſt eyn narr/der tragen will
Das jm vff heben iſt zů vil
Vnd der alleyn will vnderſton
Das er ſelb dritt nit möcht gethon

Wer ſingt Tras Tras glich wie eyn rapp
Der bliбt eyn narr biß jnn ſyn grapp
Morn hat er noch eyn gröſſer kapp
Tras
Tras
Tras
Von vff ſchlag ſuch hē
Der iſt eyn narr dem gott jn gyt
Das er ſich beſſeren ſoll noch hüt
Vnd ſoll von ſynen ſünden lan
Eyn beſſer leben voben an

Figure 3 (left). 'Of Too Much Worry' (*cap*. 24). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 4 (right). 'Of Procrastination' (*cap*. 31). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

> [Of Procrastination:
> Whoever sings 'cras, cras' like a raven will remain a fool until the grave.
> Tomorrow he will wear an even larger cap. He whom God told to improve himself today,
> to abandon his sins, and to start a better life is a fool.]

The sound of the raven, the bird of death, is drawn and written onomatopoeically in the picture, 'cras', again rather like a comic-strip illustration today. In Latin 'cras' means 'tomorrow', and that is the topic of the poem: not to postpone things that could be done now. From these two examples, the multivalency of the signs in *The Ship of Fools* is evident.

Even the ornaments, the decorations around the borders of the woodcuts, have various elements. Mausolf-Kiralp mentions twenty different types of ornamentation.[12] The frames, which are not uniform in size, some being broader than the others, contain plants, fools (as in Figure 2), and animals, including dogs, monkeys, owls, and other unidentifiable birds (as in Figures 3 and 4). Mostly the fools are climbing upwards, but in *cap.* 6 (see Figure 11 below) a fool is climbing or falling down — perhaps a mistake that occurred during the printing process. The different combinations of elements (picture, text, and ornament) exist from one chapter to another, as the following examples demonstrate.

48: A Ship of Journeymen (Figure 5)

The poem and the picture stand apart here without any additional text serving as a title or motto, and no additional ornamentation is present. There are no additional signs in the woodcut. For this reason, this specimen has often been considered as concluding a first section of the book, but there is nothing else to support this theory.

103: Of the Antichrist (Figure 6)

Here too we have a picture without title or motto, but the picture incorporates linguistic signs: 'Der Endchrist — sant peters schifflein'. The woodcut contains numerous symbolic elements, signifying original sin, hell, and possible salvation. The poem, the longest of the work, speaks about the deteriorating religious situation; about the disrespect for Church and faith. This poem might be read as a

[12] See Mausolf-Kiralp, *Die 'traditio' der Ausgaben des Narrenschiffs*, p. 72.

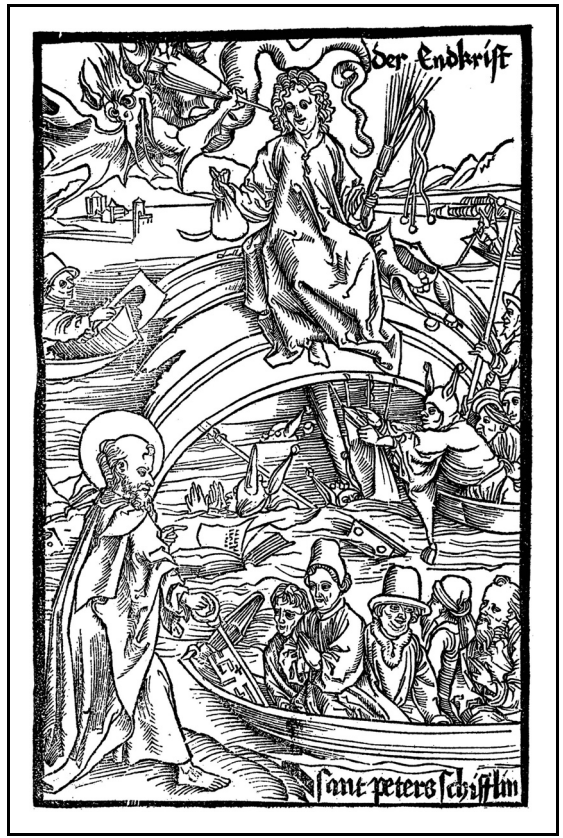


Figure 5 (left). 'A Ship of Journeymen' (*cap*. 48). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 6 (right). 'Of the Antichrist' (*cap*. 103). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

meta-text for all folly in the book, so all other signs and ornaments in the book would be related to this poem, without a need to repeat them here. Yet as this is not the final poem of the book it may not be its climax.

So, while all the elements of the chapters seem to establish an order of some kind, this order is often disrupted. The combination and design of elements can differ from one poem to the next.

The Order and Structure of Folly

Distinctions have always been made between different types of fool:

> The European words used to denote him can now seem as nebulous as they are numerous, reflecting the mercurial man behind them: fool, buffoon, clown, *jongleor*, *joculator*, *sot*, *stultor*, *scurra*, *fou*, *fol*, *truhan*, *mimus*, *historio*, *morio*. He can be any of these, while the German word *Narr* is not so much a stem as the sturdy trunk of a tree efflorescent with fool vocabulary.[13]

The German *Narr* (fool) appears with varying attire and significance. There is, for example, a so-called *Hofnarr* (court jester) and a *Schalksnarr* (rogue). But Brant denotes another kind of *Narr*. As mentioned earlier, he describes a great number of fools, from all classes of society and from every profession. Is it therefore possible to identify a basic common system of folly?

It is possible to group, as Franz Hirtler did, types of fools or areas in which people act foolishly.[14] He chose the following categories for his groupings of Brant's fools: 'Spirit and Knowledge'; 'God, Professions and Social Position'; 'Virtue and Vice'; 'Discipline and Education'; 'Ladies, Love and Marriage'; and 'Lifestyle'. In this way, Hirtler was able to arrange only seventy-one of the pictures and stories into a system, and the arrangement he came up with was completely different from that of the first Basel edition of *The Ship of Fools*. Other attempts to find an order of themes or motives resulted in new editions but no satisfying understanding of a global structural composition for *The Ship of Fools*.

Gesture might provide a further structural unity in the woodcuts. In the five figures above, gestural and facial expressions provide additional depth of meaning to the illustrations. Indeed, it is such detail in the woodcuts that demonstrates their superior artistic quality. Furthermore, a connection might be made between

[13] Beatrice D. Otto, *Fools Are Everywhere: The Court Jester Around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 1.

[14] Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff,* ed. by Franz Hirtler (Munich: Zinne, 1944).

Brant's observation that (nearly) all human beings are fools and Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of laughter.[15] Bakhtin points out that especially at the end of the Middle Ages everybody could laugh about everything, and he argues that laughter was a counter-concept to religious and political power.[16] In other words, the man who laughed was released from feelings of fear and oppression deriving from the teachings of the Church. *The Ship of Fools* both provides illustrations of laughing fools and invites laughter from the reader and spectator.

Different kinds of laughter can be distinguished: In total, there are eighteen illustrations clearly portraying laughing figures.[17] These woodcuts show fools who laugh ironically, sympathetically, naïvely, sillily, greedily, contentedly, or happily but never wisely. The text of only six of these eighteen chapters mentions 'laughing' or some synonym.

'Laughing' itself is mentioned just twice: in *cap.* 48, 'A Ship of Journeymen', 'Vil wercken und uff borg dann beitten | Vertreybt gar manchem offt das lachen' (Working a lot and waiting for paying often destroys laughter); and *cap.* 96, 'Of Donating and Repenting' (Figure 7), 'Dann wer mit eren schencken well | Der lach und syg eyn gut gesell' (Whoever wants to give something honourably should laugh and be a good guy). At the beginning of this same and in one further chapter (*cap.* 78, 'Of Depressed Fools'; Figure 8), 'happiness' and 'cheerfulness' are evoked. In *cap.* 62, 'Of Courting at Night' (Figure 9) we hear:

> Das dunt studenten, pfaffen, leyen
> Die pfiffen zu dem narren reyen
> Eyner schrygt, jauchtzet, brollt und blort.
>
> [What students, priests, and laymen do is whistle along with the fools' dance, shouting, cheering, roaring, and bellowing.]

[15] See Michael Bachtin, *Literatur und Karneval*, trans. by Alexander Kämpfe (Munich: Hanser, 1969). Dietz-Rüdiger Moser, '"Lachkultur des Mittelalters?": Michael Bachtin und die Folgen seiner Theorie', *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte,* 84 (1990), 89–111. Hermann Bausinger, 'Lachkultur', in *Vom Lachen: Einem Phänomen auf der Spur*, ed. by Thomas Vogel (Tübingen: Attempto, 1992), pp. 9–23.

[16] See Bausinger, 'Lachkultur', pp. 15–16.

[17] These chapters are 2, 'Of Good Advice' (Figure 2); 3, 'Of Greediness'; 12, 'Of Thoughtless Fools' (Figure 12); 25, 'To Borrow'; 46, 'Of the Power of the Fools' (Figure 16); 48, 'A Ship of Journeymen' (Figure 5); 50, 'Of Voluptuousness'; 60, 'Self-complacency'; 62, 'Of Courting at Night' (Figure 9); 78, 'Of Depressed Fools' (Figure 8); 83, 'Of Contempt of Poverty'; 89, 'Of Silly Exchange'; 96, 'Of Donating and Repenting' (Figure 7); 97, 'Of Laziness and Idleness' (Figure 14); 99, 'Of the Ruin of Faith'; 102, 'Of Faking and Trickery'; 103, 'Of the Antichrist' (Figure 6); and 108, 'The Ship of Cockaigne' (following the 1494 Basel edition).

Der iſt eyn narr der trurt all tag
Vmb das er nitt gewenden mag
Oder den ruwt/ das er hat gethon
Eym gütz/ ders doch nit kan verſton
Bchēckē vnd beruwē
Der iſt eyn narr/ der ſchencken dar
Vnd das nit gibt mit güttem můt
Vnd dar zů ſur/ vnd übel ſicht
Das eym nůt liebs dar von geſchicht

Vil narren ſint jn diſem druck
Die doren ſint/ jnn manchem ſtuck
Den ſitzt der eſel vff den ruck
Von gdruckten narrē.
So vil ſint jn dem narren orden
Das ich ſchier wer verſeſſen worden
Vnd hett des ſchyffes mich verſumbt
Hett mir der eſel nit gerumbt

Figure 7 (left). 'Of Donating and Repenting' (*cap*. 96). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 8 (right). 'Of Depressed Fools' (*cap*. 78). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Cap. 2 and *cap*. 12 speak of 'making fun of', 'mocking', or 'laughing at'. So the visual and linguistic signs of laughter in a direct sense are not very numerous: they do not dominate the chapters or the themes. Moreover the laughing fools do not only appear in significant chapters such as 'The Journeymen' or 'Of Depressed Fools' (which might be read as a summary of all fools) but they are also present in the other mentioned passages. But important chapters such as *cap*. 1, 'Of Useless Books' or *cap*. 103, 'Of the Antichrist' make no use of the concept of laughter. In consequence there is no reason to regard the laughing fools as elements that can give structure to the whole work of Brant's folly.

Wer vil luſt hat wie er hofiert
Nachts vff der gaſſen vor der thür
Den gluſt/das er wachend erfür
von nachtes hofyeren.
Jetz wer ſchyer vß der narren dantz
Aber das ſpiel wer nit all gantz
Wann nit hie weren ouch die löffel
Die gaſſentretter/vnd die göffel

Figure 9. 'Of Courting at Night' (*cap*. 62).
Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Although it is not possible to know which pictures have prompted laughter from contemporary spectators, we nevertheless can attempt to reconstruct which woodcuts show unexpected and therefore potentially humorous situations. I will propose to divide these curious, humorous woodcuts into four groups of pictures:

1) the literal illustration of the vehicle of the metaphor rather than the tenor as it relates to a reality;
2) pictures that present the denoted folly in an unexpected way;
3) woodcuts that show what is not normally considered a folly to be one;
4) the unexpected repetition of a woodcut in a different circumstance.

Wie wol ich vff der grüben gan
Vnd das schyntmesser im ars han
Mag ich myn narrheyt doch nit lan
Von alten narren.
Myn narrheyt loßt mich nit sin gryß
Ich byn fast alt/doch gantz vnwyß
Eyn böses kynt von hundert jor
Den jungen trag ich die schellen vor

Figure 10. 'Of Old Fools' (*cap*. 5). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

For the first case there are numerous examples: the illustration of the vehicle in *cap*. 2 of the proverb cited above (Figure 2); *cap*. 5 (Figure 10) with the fool standing with one foot in his grave and a knife sticking in his backside, illustrating two metaphors for being on the verge of death; *cap*. 6, 'Of Educating Children' (Figure 11) shows one child killing his sibling with a knife while their father sits beside them blindfolded, illustrating 'to turn a blind eye'; *cap*. 12 (Figure 12) where the fool is lying on his donkey and the saddle is not fixed; *cap*. 33, 'On Adultery' with the visualizing of two proverbs ('Durch die Finger schauen' und 'Die Katze lacht die Mäuse süß an'; 'To look through the fingers' and 'The cat laughs at the mice sweetly') denoting adultery as folly; *cap*. 94, 'Of the Hope for Inheriting' (Figure 13) where death is sitting backwards on donkey-back illustrates the idiom 'to knock nuts from a tree with a bone', that is, to profit from someone's death. In the same picture, a person shoeing the donkey is referring to the idiom 'to shoe one's own donkey', that is, to encourage folly. In *cap*. 97, 'Of Laziness and Indolence' (Figure 14) a fool is shown in a wilderness sitting idly with a spindle, so

Wer ſynen kynden übersicht
Jrn mütwil/vnd ſie ſtroffet nicht
Dem ſelb zů letzſt vil leydes geſchicht
Von ler der kind
Der iſt in narheyt gantz erblindt
Der nit mag acht han/das ſyn kyndt
Mit zůchten werden vndeiwißt
Vnd er ſich ſunders dar vff flyßt

Wer nit vor gůrt/ee dann er rytt
Vnd ſych verſicht vorhyn by zyt
Des ſpott man/fart er an eyn ſytt
Von vnbeſintē narren
Der iſt mit narheyt wol vereynt
Wer ſpricht/das hett ich nit gemeint
Dann wer bedenckt all dyng by zyt
Der ſatlet wol/ee dann er rytt

Figure 11 (left). 'Of Educating Children' (*cap.* 6). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 12 (right). 'Of Thoughtless Fools' (*cap.* 12). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Mancher frŏwt ſich/ vff frömbde hab
Wie er vil erb/vnd trag zů graß/
Sie mit ſym gbeyn nůſß werffen ab
von hoffnung vff erbē
Eyn narr iſt/wer ſich dar vff ſpytzt
Das er eyns andern erb beſytz
Oder für jn kum/jnn den rott
Syn gůt/pfründ/ampt/beſytz noch gott

Tragkeit fyndt man jn allen gſchlechten
Vor vß jnn dienſt mägten/vnd knechten
Den kan man nit genůgſam lonen
Sie künnen doch jr ſelbſt wol ſchonen
vō tragkeit vnd fulheit
Keyn beſſer narr jn aller ſach
Iſt/dann der allzyt kan thůn gmach
Vnd iſt ſo trāg/das jm verbrennt
Syn ſchyenbeyn/ee er ſich verwennt

Figure 13 (left). 'Of the Hope for Inheriting' (*cap.* 94). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 14 (right). 'Of Laziness and Indolence' (*cap.* 97). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

close to his fire that he is in danger of burning his shins, feeding the fire instead of working at his spinning.

I have identified nearly thirty such woodcuts that could make one laugh because they show improbable behaviour that is obviously exaggerated or inappropriate. In all these woodcuts above, the visualization of what the idiom says rather than what it signifies defines a fool as one who behaves absurdly. The foolishness of the behaviour is emphasized through the frequent combination of more than one metaphor.

Wer gern die wißheyt hört vnd lert
Gentzlich zů jr ſich allzyt kert
Der wurt jn ewikeyt geert
Die ler der wisheit.
Die wißheyt ſchrygt mit heller ſtym
O menſchlich gſchlecht myn wort vernym
Vff bſchydikeyt hant acht jr kyndt
Mercken all/ die jn vorheyt ſynt/

Figure 15. 'The Teaching of Wisdom' (*cap*. 22). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

For the second group of illustrations there can be found, in my view, eight examples that show a foolish situation, but the presentation of that folly differs from that which you would expect. While the first group invites literal interpretation of vehicle, the picture which is repeated for *caps* 22, 46, and 112 (Figures 15–17) demand figural interpretations. For example, contrary to the role of women in the late medieval period and clerical attitudes towards women, it is a woman, as the personification of wisdom, who instructs.[18] Here we encounter structural irony as this image accompanies a poem entitled 'The Wise Man' and seems to counter clerical attitudes towards women which positioned men as superior to women in wisdom and power, and in *cap*. 112 it is 'The Wise Man' that is addressed. It seems then that in the *Ship of*

[18] Cf. Hans Küng, *Die Frau im Christentum*, Series Piper, 3327 (Munich: Piper, 2001).

Narrheyt hatt gar eyn groß gezelt
By jr lägert die gantze welt
Vor vß / was gwalt hatt / vnd vil gelt
vō dē gwalt der narrē.
Es iſt nott / das vil narren ſynt
Sann vil ſynt an jn ſelbs erblynt
Sie mitt gwalt went witzig ſyn
So yederman ſicht vnd iſt ſchyn

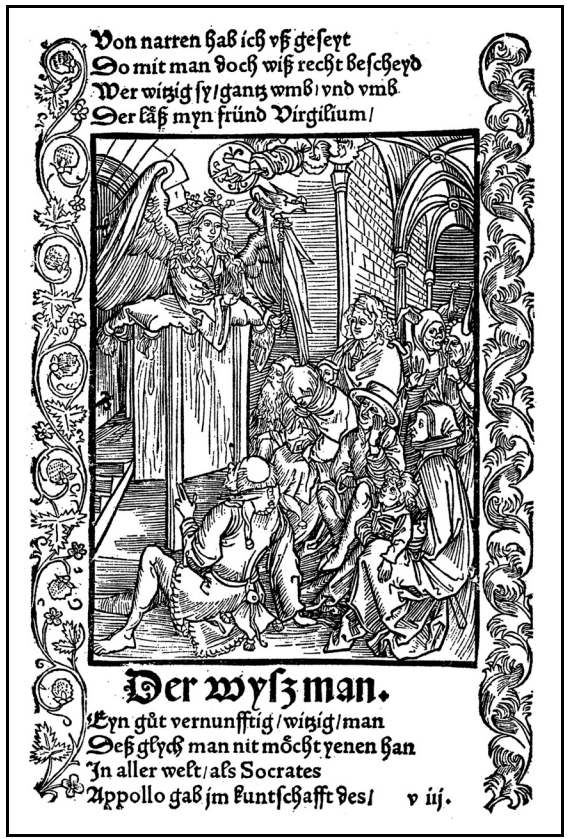

Von narren hab ich vß geſeyt
So mit man doch wiß recht beſcheyd
Wer witzig ſy / gantz wmb / vnd vmb
Der läß myn fründ Virgilium /
Der wyſz man.
Eyn gůt vernunfftig / witzig / man
Deß glych man nit möcht yenen han
In aller welt / als Socrates
Appollo gab jm kuntſchafft des / v ij.

Figure 16 (left). 'Of the Power of the Fools' (*cap*. 46). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 17 (right). 'The Wise Man' (*cap*. 112). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Fools what is written and illustrated is the opposite of the source meaning or idea. It is the literary creation of folly. Another example of an unexpected illustration of a topic is *cap.* 53, 'Of Envy and Hate' (Figure 18).[19] This illustration has nothing to do with Brant's poem, but in fact illustrates another well-known story, referred to also in the motto. Neidhart, the Austrian troubadour of the thirteenth century, attacks his 'rural enemies' with gadflies because on the one hand they are imitating courtly customs and on the other they are mocking him. This reference to the humorous literature associated with Neidhart is an indication that the *Ship of Fools* should not be treated solely as didactic but should also provide its own humour.

Vergunſt vnd haß/witt vmbhar gat
Man fyndt groß nyd /jn allem ſtat
Der nythart/der iſt noch nit dot
Von nyd vnd haſ.
Vindtſchafft vnd nyd/macht narren vil
Von den ich ouch hye ſagen will/
Der doch entſpringt alleyn dar von
Das du vergünſt mir das ich han

Figure 18. 'Of Envy and Hate' (*cap.* 53).
Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

For the third group, the unexpected folly, there can be found just three examples, *cap.* 1, 40, and 111. These woodcuts seem strange when the image and the title are taken together; the whole text, however, will make sense of the image. The image for *cap.* 1, 'Of Useless Books' (Figure 19) shows someone who is wearing glasses as an emblem of a reader, but on the other hand all he does is brush the dust off them. In this ironic image Brant demonstrates how his book should not be

[19] Cf. *Herr Neidhart Diesen Reihen Sang: Die Texte und Melodien der Neidhartlieder mit Übersetzung und Kommentaren*, ed. by Siegfried Beyschlag and Horst Brunner (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989), pp. 376–86.

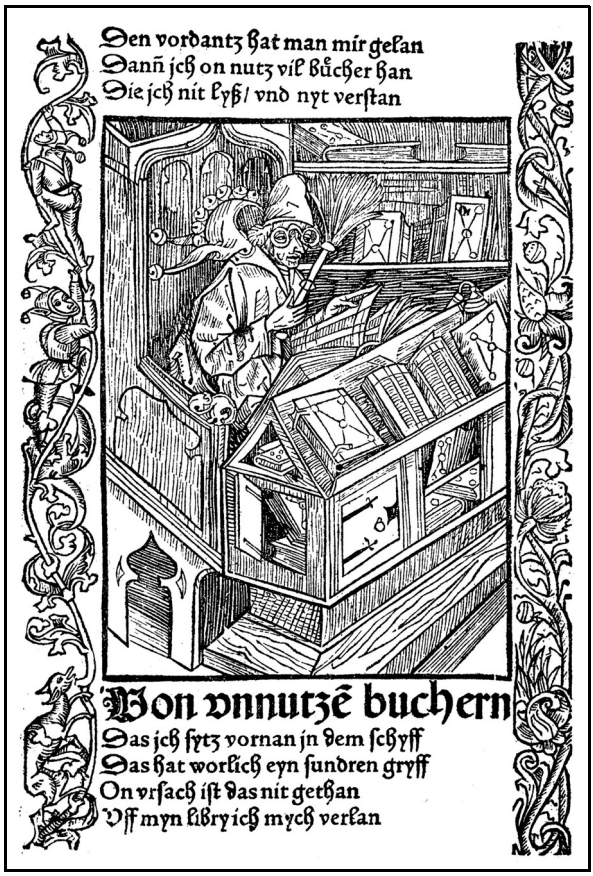

Den vordantz hat man mir gelan
Dann ich on nutz vil Bücher han
Die ich nit lyß/ vnd nyt verstan
Von vnnutzē buchern
Das ich fytz vornan in dem schyff
Das hat worlich eyn sundren gryff
On vrsach ist das nit gethan
Vff myn libry ich mych verlan

Figure 19. 'Of Useless Books' (*cap*. 1). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

used, and therefore how the book should be used, which the text goes on to describe.

Towards the end (*cap*. 111; Figure 20) there seems to be a second comment on the author's own work by entitling this chapter 'The Author's Apology'. Brant implicates himself in folly, by removing his doctor's cap, while behind him lies the fool's cap and stick. This impression is corrected by the text, when Brant names himself and advises his readers to be wise.

The third example, *cap*. 40, 'To Express Disapproval of Fools' (Figure 21), is not so clear. Disapproval might seem a good response, yet the text makes clear that it is wrong to criticize the fools who have fallen rather than looking where oneself is going. One should not despise a fool while failing to notice that oneself is in some aspects a fool.

Licht wer es/narren voßen an
Wann man ouch fündt von narrheit kan
Welcher das schon wolt vnderstan
Der wurd doch vil gehyndert dran
entschuldigūg des dich
ters
Der ist eyn narr/vnd grosser dor
Wer eym werckmā belon gibt vor
Der macht nit werschafft vff dem merckt
Wer nit vff bunfftig blonung werckt/

Wer sicht eyn narren fallen hart
Vnd er sich darnoch nit bewart
Der grifft eym narren an den bart
An narrē sich stossen
Man sicht täglich der narren fal
Vnd spottet man jr vberal
Vnd synt veracht by den wysen
Die doch jnn narren kapp sich bryse

Figure 20 (left). 'The Author's Apology' (*cap*. 111). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 21 (right). 'To Express Disapproval of Fools' (*cap*. 40). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

Fourthly and finally, five woodcuts are used twice. The pairs are as follows:

'Not to Follow Good Advice' (*cap.* 8; Figure 22) and 'Of Continuing in Good Deeds' (*cap.* 84)
'Of Serving Two Masters' (*cap.* 18; Figure 23) and 'Of the Uselessness of Hunting' (*cap.* 74)
'The Teaching of Wisdom' (*cap.* 22; Figure 15) and 'The Wise Man' (*cap.* 112; Figure 17)
'Of Being Angry Easily' (*cap.* 35; Figure 24) and 'Of Bad Wives' (*cap.* 64)
'Of the Fall of Fortune' (*cap.* 37) and 'Of the End of Power' (*cap.* 56; Figure 25)

The curious aspect of this artistic method is that these topics can converge or diverge. The phenomenon of similarities and differences could be understood as something that is accidental, but is more likely to be systematic or structural. That leads us back to the question of what is achieved structurally by the representation of laughter in the woodcuts.

Firstly these different humorous situations in the pictures present different methods to support the ironic tendency of the chapters. These images evoke a humorous response more than the decidedly didactic texts do. Secondly, these images do not lead us to a coherent structure. There are different methods of ironic presentation, and they are not used regularly or consistently. Furthermore, the visual connection of two topics by the same image is not used according to a pattern, nor are they used for marking special passages of the work.

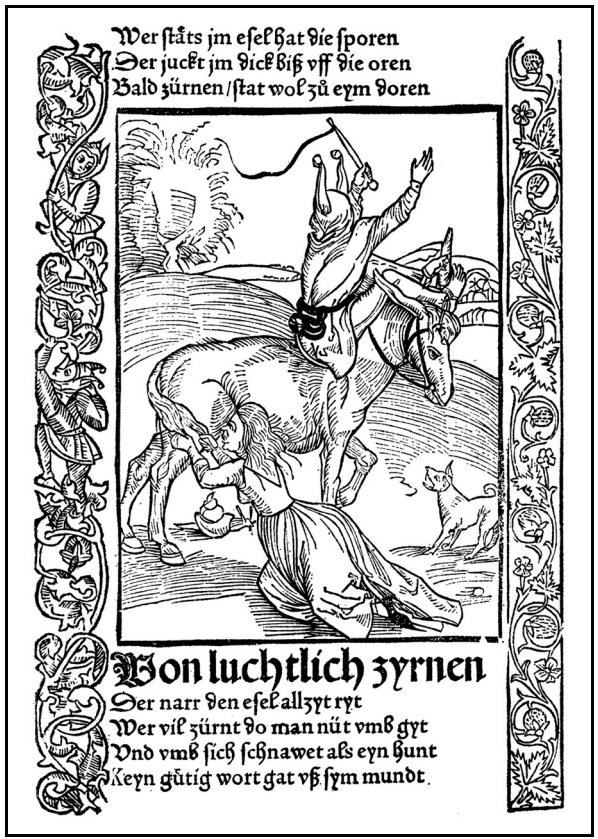
Only by taking into account the specific attributes and actions of the individual fools can a common system of folly for Brant's *Narren* be defined. There is indeed a pattern for every theme that derives from religious or secular law, from common or social orders, and from experience or tradition. Everyone knows that rules exist and, despite that knowledge, fools act against them. These rules are mentioned and more or less described in each poem. Thus, attributes of the normal, everyday world are almost always the backdrop for the fool and his foolish behaviour in the woodcuts. The 'almost always', or rather 'not always', is the key to the structure of folly and to the structure of this book of folly.

This book pretends to offer a structure, inviting comprehension in terms of an order of themes, motifs, signs, metaphors, and allegory, only to have this order undermined in the next illustration or the next text. The elements of the chapters (text, ornament, and picture) suggest an internal structure, but variation in combinations and presentation defy structure. Grand topics, such as religion, men and women, education, and power, are treated in the poems, but appear randomly, dispersed throughout the book without coherent, thematic groupings. This playing on expectations culminates in the table of contents at the end of the first edition.

Wer nit kan ſprechen ja vnd neyn
Vnd pflegen ratt vmb̃ groß vnd kleyn
Der hab̃ den ſchaden jm allein
Nit volgen gutem ratt.
Der iſt ein narr der wyſ̃ will ſyn
Vnd weder glympf /noch moß dût ſchyn
Vnd wenn er wyßheit pflegen will
So iſt ein gouch ſyn fädersyl/

Der vocht zwen haſen vff ein mol
Wer meynt zweyn herren dienen wol
Vnd richten vß me dann er ſol
vō dienſt zweyer herrē
Der iſt eyn narr der vnderſtot
Der welt zů dienen/vnd ouch got
Dann wo zwen herren hat eyn knecht
Der mag jn nyemer dienen recht

Figure 22 (left). 'Not to Follow Good Advice' (*cap*. 8). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 23 (right). 'Of Serving Two Masters' (*cap*. 18). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.


Wer ſtåts jm eſel hat die ſporen
Der juckt jm dick biß vff die oren
Bald zürnen / ſtat wol zů eym doren
Von luchtlich zyrnen
Der narr den eſel allzyt ryt
Wer vil zürnt do man nüt vmb gyt
Vnd vmb ſich ſchnawet als eyn hunt
Keyn gütig wort gat vß ſym mundt.

So groß gewalt vff erd nye kam
Der nitt zů zytten / end ouch nam
Wann jm ſyn zyl / vnd ſtündlin kam
von end des gewaltes
Noch fyndt man narren manigfalt
Die ſich verkont vff iren gwalt
Als ob er ewiklich ſolt ſton
Der doch důt / wie der ſchne zergon

Figure 24 (left). 'Of Being Angry Easily' (*cap.* 35). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.
Figure 25 (right). 'Of the End of Power' (*cap.* 56). Woodcut from Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

It is telling that, since this first edition, no edition until Joachim Knape's (2005) includes this table of contents:

Register des Narrenschiffs

A
Eyn vorred in das Narrenschiff
[1] Von vnnützen büchern
[2] Von guten räten
[3] Von gyttikeyt
[4] Von nuwen fünden
[5] Von altten narren

B
[6] Von ler der kynd
[7] Von zwitracht machen
[8] Nit volgen gutem rat
[9] Von bosen sitten
[10] Von worer früntschafft
[11] Verachtung der geschrifft
[12] Von vnbesynten narren

C
[13] Von bulschaft
[14] Von vermessenheyt gottes
[15] Von narrechtem anschlag
[16] Von füllen vnd prassen
[17] Von vnnützem richtum
[18] Von dienst zweyer herren

D
[19] Von vil schwätzen
[20] Von schatz fynden
[21] Ander stroffen vnd selb thun
[22] Die ler der wyßheyt
[23] Von überhebung glücks
[24] Von zu vil sorgen
[25] Zu borg vff nemmen

E
[26] Von vnnützem wünschen
[27] Von vnnutzem studieren
[28] Von wider gott reden
[29] Der ander lüt vrteilt
[30] Von vile der pfründen
[31] Von vff schlag suchen
[32] Von frowen hüten

F
[33] Vom eebruch
[34] Narr hür als vern
[35] Von lichtlich zürnen
[36] Von eygenrichtikeit
[37] Von glückes fall
[38] Von krancken die nit volgen

G
[39] Von offlichem anschlag
[40] An narren sich stossen
[41] Nit achten vff alle red
[42] Von spott vogeln
[43] Verachtung ewiger freüd
[44] Gebracht jn der kirchen
[45] Von mutwilligem vngefell
[46] Von dem gewalt der narren

H
[47] Von dem weg der sellikeyt
[48] Eyn gesellen schiff
[49] Böß exempel der eltern
[50] Von wollust
[51] Heymlikeyt verschwigen
[52] Wiben durch guts willen

J
[53] Von nid vnd hasß
[54] Von vngedult der stroff
[55] Von narrechter artzny
[56] Von end des gewalts
[57] Von fürwissenheit gottes
[58] Syn selbst vergessen

K
[59] Von undanckbarkeyt
[60] Jm selbst wolgefallen
[61] Von dantzen
[62] Von nachts hofieren
[63] Von bettlern
[64] Von bosern wibern

L
[65] Von achtung des gestirns
[66] Von erfarung aller land
[67] Nit wellen eyn narr syn
[68] Schympf nit verston

M
[69] Böß tun vnd nit wartten
[70] Nit fürsehen by zyt
[71] Zancken vnd zu gericht gon
[72] Von groben narren
[73] Von geistlich werden
[74] Von vnnützem jagen

N
[75] Von bosen schützen
[76] Von grossem rumen
[77] Von spielern
[78] Von gedruckten narren
[79] Von rütern vnd schribern

O
[80] Von narrechter botschafft
[81] Von köchen vnd kellern
[82] Von bürischem vffgang
[83] Von verachtung armut
[84] Von beharren in gutem
[85] Nit fürsehen den dott

P
[86] Von verachtung gottes
[87] Von gottes lestern

[88] Von plag vund stroff gottes
[89] Von dorechtem wechsel
[90] Ere vatter vnd muter

Q
[91] Von schwätzen jm chor
[92] Vberhebung der hochfart
[93] Von wucher vnd fürkouff
[94] Von hoffnung vff erben
[95] Von verfürung am fyrtag
[96] Schencken vnd beruwen

R
[97] Von trakeit vnd fulheit
[98] Von ußlendigen narren
[99] Von abgang des gloubens
[100] Von falbem hengst strichen
[101] Von oren blosern

S
[102] Vom falsch vnd beschisß
[103] Vom endkrist
[104] Von worheit verschwigen
[105] Von hynderniß des gutten

T
[106] Ablassung guter werck
[107] Von lon der wißheit
[108] Das schluraffen schiff
[109] Verachtung vngefels
[110] Hynder red des guten

V
[111] Entschuldigung des dichters
|112] Der wiß man

The table of contents divides the poems into groups of two to eight poems and affiliates them with a letter of the alphabet. But there are at last two inconsistencies: the alphabet has only the letters from A to U, and the titles of the poems have nothing to do with the letter under which they come. So order here is illusory. This in my view is the structure of folly itself. The unfixed relationship between word and image and the varying structure of the illustrations, ornaments, and mottos reflect this essence of folly impressively, vibrantly, and, perhaps, even foolishly.

Appendix

Woodcuts from Sebastian Brant's Narrenschiff.

Real Laughing Fools

2, 'Of Good Advice' (Figure 2)
12, 'Of Thoughtless Fools' (Figure 10)
48, 'A Ship of Journeymen' (Figure 5)
62, 'Of Courting at Night' (Figure 9)
78, 'Of Depressed Fools' (Figure 8)
96, 'Of Donating and Repenting' (Figure 7)
103, 'Of the Antichrist' (Figure 6)

Implicit Irony

5, 'Of Old Fools' (Figure 11)
6, 'Of Educating Children' (Figure 12)
12, 'Of Thoughtless Fools' (Figure 10)
94, 'Of the Hope for Inheriting' (Figure 13)
97, 'Of Laziness and Indolence' (Figure 14)

Wisdom and Power

22, 'The Teaching of Wisdom' (Figure 15)
46, 'Of the Power of the Fools' (Figure 17)
53, 'Of Envy and Hate' (Figure 18)
112, 'The Wise Man' (Figure 16)

Unexpected Fools

1, 'Of Useless Books' (Figure 19)
40, 'To Express Disapproval of Fools' (Figure 21)
111, 'The Author's Apology' (Figure 20)

Twice-used Illustrations

8, 'Not to Follow Good Advice' (Figure 22) / 84, 'Of Continuing in Good Deeds'
18, 'Of Serving Two Masters' (Figure 23) / 74, 'Of the Uselessness of Hunting'
22, 'The Teaching of Wisdom' (Figure 15) / 112, 'The Wise Man' (Figure 16)
35, 'Of Being Angry Easily' (Figure 24) / 64, 'Of Bad Wives'
37, 'Of the Fall of Fortune' / 56, 'Of the End of Power' (Figure 25)

Eulenspiegel Meets Nasreddin: A Fools' Contest

Alexander Schwarz

Till Eulenspiegel was the first eponymous hero in the history of originally German literature who is still active and attractive today.[1] The main problems with this text are that we have a hard time in establishing its message (if it has one) and, intertwined with the first problem, the reason or secret of its ongoing success. The short stories it consists of, called 'Historien' in the text, are as simple and unpretentious as is their hero, who, at the same time, is extremely difficult to characterize. Rüdiger Schnell has called him 'revolutionary', 'court jester', 'liberation hero', 'anarchist', 'rogue', 'villain', 'enlightener', 'wise fool', 'criminal', 'moralist', 'Antichrist', 'marginal', and this list could be prolonged.[2] I want to try to overcome this problem by making use of comparison, an old method the charm of which has been rediscovered lately.[3] The objects of comparison[4] will be Eulenspiegel and the other eminently popular (literary) fool, Nasreddin Hodja. With our

[1] The oldest internationally successful German narrative that was not taken over from a foreign language and literature was the *Fortunatus* of 1509, at least as far as the oldest versions that have come to us are concerned. The *Fortunatus*, however, is today only known by specialists.

[2] Rüdiger Schnell, 'Das Eulenspiegel-Buch in der Gattungsgeschichte der Schwankdichtungen', in *Hermann Bote: Städtisch-hansischer Autor in Braunschweig 1488–1988*, ed. by Herbert Blume and Eberhard Rohse (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991), pp. 171–98 (pp. 171–72).

[3] *Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. by Heinz Gerd Haupt and Jürgen Kocka (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996); *Vergleichende Wissenschaften*, ed. by Peter V. Zima (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000); Ute Heidmann, 'Epistémologie et pratique de la comparaison différentielle', in *Comparer les comparatismes*, ed. by Maya Burger and Claude Calame, special issue, *Études de Lettres*, 4 (2005), 141–59.

[4] Here, our terminology follows Heidmann, 'Epistémologie et pratique'.

working hypothesis that both behave like fools, the popularity of these two characters and their resistance to definition form the axis of comparison. The criteria of comparison will be drawn from those new philology theories that are in line with this volume, that is, that have to do with bodily behaviour and the emotions it calls forth.

After introducing the two characters and the text worlds from which they emerge, we will ask whether and how they actually behave like fools, what kinds of humour they activate in doing so, if the responses to their actions within and outside the texts allow us to determine whether they actually were regarded as fools or just as 'people like you and me' behaving like fools, and what place they occupy in the collective imagination of early modern Europe as developed by Peter Burke, Paul Radin, and Mikhail Bakhtin.[5] Finally we will, on the basis of the steps before, try to dynamize the static concept of 'place in an imagination' by redefining it as a specific repertoire of performativity, to use one of the central terms of new philology.

Two Texts — Two Characters

Geographically and culturally separated though they are, Nasreddin Hodja and Till Eulenspiegel have many points in common. They both seem to be traceable to historical persons who lived around 1300, the one as a Muslim teacher in Turkey, the other as a vagabond in northern Germany. Both appear for the first time in collections of numerous anecdotes ('Schwänke') around 1500, the one in Turkish manuscripts, the other in German printed books with prompt translations into Dutch and English, French and Latin, Polish, Czech, and Danish. From the nineteenth century onwards, both collections were revised and became harmless but succesful chapbooks ('Volksbücher')[6] and children's literature. Nasreddin and

[5] Peter Burke, *Helden, Schurken und Narren: Europäische Volkskultur in der frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981); Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956); Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holmquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[6] While Romanticism, when discovering the early printed popular broadsheets and books, coined for them the term 'Volksbuch', we talk today of early modern 'prose novels' and reserve the term 'Volksbuch' for eighteenth- and ninteenth-century cheap booklets disseminated by book-hawkers; cf. Hans Joachim Kreutzer, *Der Mythos vom Volksbuch: Studien zur Wirkungsgeschichte des frühen deutschen Romans seit der Romantik* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1977); Jan-Dirk Müller, 'Volksbuch/Prosaroman im 15./16. Jahrhundert', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der Literatur*, *Sonderheft*, 1 (1985), 1–128.

Eulenspiegel are both crystalization characters ('Kristallisationsfiguren') absorbing anecdotes about other fools, Eulenspiegel for instance some about the thirteenth-century Pfaffe Amis,[7] Nasreddin about a seventh-century character from Iraq called Djuha whose pranks are transmitted in Arabic manuscripts from the ninth century on. Their main difference is their aforementioned place in society: the stories begin with Eulenspiegel, an outsider, entering a community and end with his leaving; Nasreddin is a hodja,[8] living in a village where he remains even after having outwitted his neighbours. Interestingly, both literary models for Eulenspiegel are priests, Amis and an Austrian colleague, who lives in a small village outside Vienna but who is also jester at the court of the Duke of Austria.[9] So the social difference between Nasreddin's settledness and Eulenspiegel's vagrancy does not exclude comparison.

Our corpus consists of Paul Oppenheimer's translation of the *Till Eulenspiegel* version printed in 1515 by Johannes Grüninger in Straßburg, published in 1995 in the Oxford University Press 'World's Classics' paperback series, where Eulenspiegel meets Jane Eyre and the Koran, Don Quixote and Madame Bovary, Melmoth the Wanderer and Moby Dick.[10] For Nasreddin Hodja, I rely on the expertise of Ulrich Marzolph and his 1996 German edition of 666 'true' stories from the Juha and Nasreddin tradition.[11] Without his introduction I would not have dared to include texts into this paper that belong to languages and cultures I do not know.[12]

[7] Cf. Cordula Böcking-Politis in this volume.

[8] A religious 'teacher or scholar'; Marzolph also gives the etymology 'Victory of faith' for his first name Nasreddin: *Nasreddin Hodschas 666 wahre Geschichten*, ed. by Ulrich Marzolph (Munich: Beck, 1996), p. 11.

[9] Der Pfaffe vom Kalenberg; see Philip Frankfurter, 'Die geschicht des pfarrers von Kalenberg', in *Narrenbuch*, ed. by Felix Bobertag, Deutsche National-Litteratur, 11 (Berlin: Spemann, 1884), pp. 1–86; cf. Ulrich Müller, 'Eulenspiegel und seine historischen Vorfahren in Oesterreich', *Eulenspiegel-Jahrbuch*, 26 (1986), 11–27.

[10] *Till Eulenspiegel*, trans. by Paul Oppenheimer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[11] *Nasreddin Hodschas*, ed. by Marzolph.

[12] At this point I want to express my thanks to Hilary Kilpatrick for her reading a former version of the manuscript. Her paper, Stefan Leder and Hilary Kilpatrick, 'Classical Arabic Prose Literature: A Researchers' Sketch Map', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 23 (1992), 2–25, provided me with important background information.

Behaving Like Fools?

Two stories about Nasreddin and about Eulenspiegel may serve as an introduction to their behaviour:

> One day, Nasreddin was in court with an opponent. Nasreddin made a sign to the judge putting his hand ostensibly into his pocket. The judge decided in his favour and, when the other party had left, asked Nasreddin for what he had promised him.

We have to deal with a well-established and highly ritualized setting in the form of a trial. Nasreddin slightly offends the ritual by doing something that is not part of it. However, the judge seems to be acquainted with such a gesture that so far appears neither to him nor to the reader/listener as foolish. So the judge's request after the trial, after the performed ritual, corresponds to everyone's expectation. But if Nasreddin now produced his coins and handed them over to the judge, there would be no Nasreddin story, it would be no story at all. The story becomes a story, and at the same time ends, with Nasreddin's answer:

> 'I did not promise you anything. I wanted to signal to you that, if the other won, I would have thrown the pebbles that are in my pocket at your head.'[13]

> Eulenspiegel stayed quite a while at [an] inn in Cologne. Then it happened that the food was brought to the fire very late [...]. Eulenspiegel felt annoyed that he had to go hungry so long. Well, the innkeeper could see that this bothered him, so he told Eulenspiegel that whoever could not wait till the food was ready could just eat whatever he had. Eulenspiegel [had] a roll, and he went to sit by the hearth, where he basted the roast till it was ready. Well, [...] the food was served, and the innkeeper and his guests took their places — but Eulenspiegel stayed in the kitchen.
>
> The innkeeper said, 'What's this? Don't you want to sit at the table?'
>
> 'No,' said Eulenspiegel. 'I don't want to eat. I got full from the smell of your roast.'
>
> The innkeeper said nothing and ate with his guests. When the meal was over, they paid the innkeeper. Then one left, another stayed behind, but Eulenspiegel remained sitting by the fire. The innkeeper came over with his tally board [...] and told Eulenspiegel to pay him two Cologne white-pennies for the meal.
>
> Eulenspiegel said, 'Mr Innkeeper, are you the sort of fellow who takes money from someone who hasn't eaten his food?'
>
> The innkeeper said acidly that he had better just pay the money. Even if Eulenspiegel had eaten nothing, he had still gotten full from the smell. [...] The innkeeper would count that as a meal.
>
> Eulenspiegel took out a Cologne white-penny and . . .

[13] The text is my translation and adaptation of *Nasreddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, no. 272.

The innkeeper does not follow the 'well-established and ritualized' script of exchanging food and money. He tries to exploit his authority over the inn to get payment without service. According to social historians, such a behaviour was no less usual than a lawyer's corruptibility.[14] But, again, Eulenspiegel would not be Eulenspiegel and the text not a story if Eulenspiegel now handed his coins over to the innkeeper.

> . . . and threw it onto the bench. 'Mr Innkeeper, do you hear that sound?'
>
> The innkeeper said, 'I hear the sound all right.'
>
> Eulenspiegel was fast with his penny and flipped it back into his purse. He said, 'The sound of that penny helps you exactly as much as the smell of your roast helped my stomach.'
>
> The innkeeper was not a little peeved, as he wanted the white-penny, but Eulenspiegel refused to hand it over, and [...] threatened to bring the matter to court. The innkeeper gave in. He had no desire to go to court.[15]

The kind of complicating action Eulenspiegel as well as Nasreddin come up with can only be described as fool-like: they both invent tricks we would not dream of and create that strange feeling of not knowing whether this works or not, whether it is a stroke of madness or of genius, and how the opponents could and should react. There are also differences to be noted: in the comparable situation of being asked to pay on shaky ground, Eulenspiegel uses more body language than Nasreddin who is only verbal. As for the telling of the story, Nasreddin's ends with the punch line while Eulenspiegel's includes the resolution.[16]

Welcome to the Fools' Contest

This leads to the question: what are fools? Fools are ambiguous: this is one of the best definitions I can think of. This ambiguity lies in the term 'fool' which covers the ingenuity of a so-called artificial fool as well as the lack of common sense of a so-called natural fool, plus the case where it is impossible to decide between the

[14] Richard von Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 3 vols (Munich: Beck, 1992), II: *Dorf und Stadt*, p. 132.

[15] *Till Eulenspiegel*, trans. by Oppenheimer, Hist. 79.

[16] The story grammar terms *complicating action* and *resolution* have been coined by William Labov, 'The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax', in *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), pp. 354–96. Cf. the Introduction to this volume.

two.[17] We need a theory that will encompass them all. Semiotics provides a means to describe the words and deeds of fools that, intentionally or not, trigger the emotional and gestural response which fools typically arouse: laughter. The stimulus that causes laughter is of course humour (Komik), and most humour theorists are in agreement with what Schopenhauer called *Inkongruenz*, Bakhtin *mesalliance*, Arthur Koestler *bisociation*, and Raskin and Attardo *script opposition*.[18] The greatest fool is the master of *bisociation* and creates the most significant *script oppositions*. Raskin and Attardo also take into consideration other features of funny gestures, and I will retain their concept of *logical mechanism*. The winner of the mock fools' contest I am going to set up between Eulenspiegel and Nasreddin will be the one who brings together the most dissociated domains and who does so in the most surprising and convincing way.

To start with, our two texts share the most impressive script oppositions. I am limiting my examples to (1) gold vs. stones, (2) human beings vs. animals, and (3) the House of God vs. the privy.

Gold vs. Stones

> Once Nasreddin came to a country where it was the custom to put a flag on the roof for every pot of gold possessed. Nasreddin filled many pots with stones and put a number of flags on his roof accordingly. When the fast was broken after Ramadan, everyone invited guests. In Nasreddin's house they found just stones and blamed him for his bluffing. He replied: 'If they are destined to stay in the pot, gold or stones makes no difference.'[19]

> When Eulenspiegel became [...] seriously ill, he made his last will [...] dividing his possessions into three parts — one for his friends, one for the Council of Mölln, and one for the priest there — but with this stipulation: [...] that his corpse be buried in hallowed ground and his soul dispatched with vigils and masses according to Christian practice and custom. [...] When everything had been done according to his will, [...] the Council, the parish priest, and Eulenspiegel's friends came over and opened the chest to divide the treasure he had left. But when it was opened they found nothing in it but stones. Everybody looked at everybody else, and they began to [suspect one another]. The priest and the Council now

[17] Cf. Olivier Pot, 'Des mots du fou: un délire terminologique', in *'Fripon, bouffon, sot': pour une relecture de Bakhtin*, ed. by Ekatarina Velmezova and Alexander Schwarz, Cahiers du Centre de Traduction Littéraire, 50 (Lausanne: Centre de Traduction Littéraire, 2008), pp. 75–108.

[18] Cf. Dietmar Marhenke, 'Britischer Humor im interkulturellen Kontext' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Braunschweig University of Technology, 2003), pp. 36–43.

[19] *Nasreddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, no. 284; adaptation mine.

> decided to dig Eulenspiegel up again. But [...] the grave stank so badly that no one could remain there. So they filled the grave a second time.[20]

If we compare the mechanisms of how the trick is played, then Eulenspiegel's posthumous olfactory gestures opposing Nasreddin's verbal argumentation underscore what we remarked upon in the previous section. Since doing by speaking is neither better nor worse than speaking by doing, I would call this a draw.

Human Beings vs. Animals

> One day his neighbours wanted to borrow Nasreddin's donkey. He said that the donkey was not there. Just at that moment the donkey cried. The neighbours said: 'But Hodja, your donkey is here!' — 'How strange,' the Hodja replied, 'They believe the donkey, but they don't believe me!'[21]

> At several university towns, Eulenspiegel announced that he was a great scholar who could solve every problem. The professors at Erfurt decided 'to offer Eulenspiegel an ass to teach — since there are many asses at Erfurt, both old and young'. When Eulenspiegel found out that the donkey was able to turn the pages of a book with his nose and that he would do so when grains of oat were dispersed there, he invited the professors to come and see the pupil's progress. He stuck a book in front of his pupil who started flipping over the pages for the oats. When he did not find any, he began to scream [...]. Eulenspiegel at once said, 'Observe, dear gentlemen, the two vowels "e" and "a". These he can [read] so far. I am hoping he may yet do nicely.'[22]

Here again, Nasreddin scores with the unexpected reply and Eulenspiegel with the gestures and noises — this time the donkey's.

The House of God vs. the Privy

> One day during his sermon Nasreddin Hodja said: 'You Moslems! Thank God that He has not attached your asshole to your forehead! Had he done so, you would soil your face every day!'[23]

> How Eulenspiegel became the sexton in the village of Büddenstedt and [...] won a barrel of beer.

[20] *Till Eulenspiegel*, trans. by Oppenheimer, Hist. 92.

[21] *Nasreddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, no. 172; adaptation mine.

[22] *Till Eulenspiegel*, trans. by Oppenheimer, Hist. 29; adaptation mine.

[23] *Nasreddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, no. 132; translation mine.

> One day the priest was standing before his altar, vesting himself and preparing to say Mass. Eulenspiegel stood behind him, arranging the priest's vestment decently. The priest now let loose so enormous a fart that it thundered through the church. Eulenspiegel [...] said, 'Sir, [is] this how you serve Our Lord, with this sort of incense smoke, here before His altar?' The priest replied, '[...] This church is mine right enough. I've even got the right to shit in the middle of this church.' Eulenspiegel said, 'It will cost either you or me a barrel of beer.' [And the priest shitted in the church and reclaimed the barrel. But] Eulenspiegel measured it. It was far from the middle of the church. So Eulenspiegel won the barrel of beer. But the priest's housemaid was outraged. She said, 'You won't let that cunning servant go till he brings you into utter disgrace.'[24]

Once more, Nasreddin stands out for sophistication and Eulenspiegel for staging. They proceed differently but are fools at the same level.

Fools' contests belong to the rituals involving fools. Eulenspiegel and Nasreddin both are engaged in such contests, the former even in an explicit one. I'd like to set up this last comparison as an intertextual contest for the title of 'greatest fool of all times'. Hist. 24 tells 'How Eulenspiegel, with a superior trick, humiliated the King of Poland's jester'. Paul Oppenheimer seems to appreciate what he calls 'a superior trick' more than the sixteenth-century author who speaks of 'grober schalckheit', or coarse trickery.

> Eulenspiegel was invited to the court of King Casimir, who already had a jester. When he noticed the jealousy between the two, he organized a contest: 'Whichever of you makes the wildest performance — one that the other cannot repeat after him — I'll give that fellow new clothes and twenty guilders. And let's get started right now.' So the two set about their clowning, performing a lot of absurd tricks, with funny faces and peculiar speeches. Whatever the one could think up for the other, this one repeated it as well. The King laughed, along with his knights, and they saw all sorts of bizarre acts. Eulenspiegel then reflected, 'Twenty guilders and a new wardrobe — that would be rather nice. I shall thus do something I would otherwise find unpleasant.' He does the most uncourtly thing he — or I — can think of and wins.[25]

The philosopher Walther Zimmerli has criticized Eulenspiegel's final gesture arguing that it would have been physically possible for the other jester to imitate it. On the other hand, Zimmerli claims, pretending to swallow a mouthful of water and later on spitting it out would have been inimitable.[26] However, swallowing and

[24] *Till Eulenspiegel*, trans. by Oppenheimer, Hist. 12.

[25] *Till Eulenspiegel*, trans. by Oppenheimer, Hist. 24; adaptation mine.

[26] Walther Ch. Zimmerli, 'du fährst ja doch nach Lodz!', *Eulenspiegel-Jahrbuch*, 44 (2004), 151–68 (p. 164).

spitting forms a poor script opposition compared to Eulenspiegel's producing and eating shit.

> A Frenchman came to the Sultan and said he was ready to become a Turk if the Sultan could read his mind. The Sultan called for Nasreddin to do the job for him. Nasreddin tried to escape, arguing that he did not speak French, but a debate in sign language was organized. The Frenchman started making a circular movement in front of Nasreddin which he in response cut in two. The Frenchman raised his hand several times and Nasreddin lowered his. The Frenchman took an egg out of his pocket and Nasreddin a cheese. The Frenchman gave up. When the Sultan questioned him, he said that with his circle he had expressed that the earth was round and Nasreddin had added that half of it was water. The raising hands had referred to the growth of plants while Nasreddin had specified that rain was needed for that. The egg was an image of the world, Nasreddin's white cheese obviously an image of the world in winter.
>
> The version Nasreddin gave the Sultan later was quite different. The Frenchman had been referring to a loaf of bread and Nasreddin had asked him to share it. Then the Frenchman had acted as if he would beat a piece of meat and Nasreddin had reminded him not to forget the seasoning. When finally the Frenchman had proposed an omelette, Nasreddin had opted for a cheese omelette.[27]

Eulenspiegel makes eating and its contrary overlap; Nasreddin, in his wise men's contest, mixes eating with cosmology. Including the contrary may be the most impressive script opposition, but the wisdom of the fool thanks to the foolishness of the wise man does the same thing with the Nasreddin story. Why could this favourite story of mine never have become part of the Eulenspiegel universe? Because Eulenspiegel lacks a trait that the hero of the Turkish story needs, the naive self-overestimation which one finds in many Nasreddin anecdotes. However, according to our theory, this trait does not provide qualification for the title of 'greatest fool of all time'. On the other hand it justifies our decision not to distinguish between intentional and unintentional foolish behaviour. And it stresses the importance of the receiver and his interpretation when giving a sign a meaning and stresses the impact of emotions when dealing with gestures. Both opponents, the Polish court jester and the Frenchman, lost their nerve and gave up — one full of disgust, the other full of admiration. We may react the same way, but the theoretically founded rules of the contest do not allow us to give in to our emotions. The result of the fool's contest is a draw — which seems to be a good conclusion since we only looked at a handful of the 96 *Eulenspiegel*-stories Oppenheimer offers or the 666 histories in Marzolph's *Nasreddin*-collection and since both characters still produce new stories.

[27] *Nasreddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, no. 588; adapation mine.

Gesture and Emotion

Let us try to generalize our last observations and ask how other characters in the Eulenspiegel and Nasreddin stories and their authors and readers have assessed the two of them. In the ten Eulenspiegel and Nasreddin stories we have discussed here, the following types of reactions are related by the narrator:

Eulenspiegel, Hist. 24 (court jesters): the king's fool swears: 'Daz thu dir der Tüffel nach' (May the devil imitate you);[28] the king, on the other hand, seems to be satisfied and declares Eulenspiegel the winner: 'the king gave him the new clothes and the twenty guilders'.
Hist. 79 (Sound and Smell): as we have seen, the innkeeper does not find it funny, but finally he gives in not wanting to have the whole business investigated by a court.
Hist. 29 (the donkey's reading): no reaction at all from the university people. The text continues saying that 'the rector died pretty soon afterwards'.
Hist. 92 (the testament): The people of Mölln did not see the gag and suspected each other. Whether the stench of his corpse opened their eyes (or rather their noses) is not told.
Hist. 12 (the bet in the church): the priest's housemaid is not amused, implying that the priest himself liked the joke and probably laughed about it.

Reactions vary between the frustration of the deceived and the laughter of the audience, with the roles inversed in Hist. 12. For the priest, like for most of his colleagues in the book, an encounter with Eulenspiegel means escape from boredom and daily routine. It seemingly outweighs the financial loss and the loss of face, all that the housemaid can see in this episode.[29] Undoubtedly, the scene in the church is a pre-Reformation satire on the conduct of priests, criticized by the housemaid, as the scene at court (*Nasreddin*, no. 272) satirizes the judge's behaviour.

Nasreddin, no. 588 (philosopher's contest): The opponent falls into admiration, the sultan bursts into laughter. The other four stories end, as most of the 666, with Nasreddin's punch line and leave us without reactions in the text.

[28] *Ein kurtzweilig Lesen von Dil Ulenspiegel*, ed. by Wolfgang Lindow (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1966), Hist. 24. The English edition of *Till Eulenspiegel* leaves out the swearing.

[29] For these two elements, see Ralph Breyer, 'Die Herrschaft zum Lachen bringen: Zur Funktion der Komik in Philipp Frankfurters *Pfarrer vom Kalenberg*', in *Komische Gegenwelten: Lachen und Literatur in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Werner Röcke and Helga Neumann (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999), pp. 63–78.

In both books, the other stories confirm our findings in the ten episodes. Members of the nobility and parsons see the funny rather than the roguish aspect of Eulenspiegel's behaviour, unlike members of guilds and parsons' housemaids. Only rarely does he elicit admiration.[30] In the Nasreddin corpus, the few reactions we find fall into different categories. Again, there is admiration for his cunning as well as anger paired with laughter at his wit as well as derision of his stupidity.[31] The author underlines Eulenspiegel's *listiger und durchtribener*, 'foxy and roguish' character, whereas he has Eulenspiegel refer to himself as the 'greatest fool or buffoon in the world' (Hist. 14). Only in 1867, when Charles de Coster's novel *La Légende d'Ulenspiegel* was first printed in Paris, did Eulenspiegel's positive image begin, that of a hero and of a wise fool. In the Marzolph corpus, Nasreddin sees himself once as stupid and once as clever.[32] One narrator speaks of 'stupid behaviour', another claims that Nastratin, as he is called in an Albanian version, 'had deceived the whole world'.[33] Marzolph situates the image of Nasreddin somewhere between the 'charming and loveable philosopher who with disarming simplicity uncovers the fundamental weaknesses and inconsistencies of human existence' and the 'trickster with a thousand faces', a point of view that Marzolph clearly favours.[34] The 'philosopher' is probably an allusion to Idries Shah's interpretation of Nasreddin as a Sufi teacher working with funny and seemingly absurd illustrations of his doctrine.[35]

As a synthesis, we can ascertain that both characters count as fools. This is of course corroborated by the fact that funny stories about the two characters have been passed on through the centuries in a way that identifies them both with the stories about them. Just like Eulenspiegel, Nasreddin behaves strangely in all the anecdotes — an anecdote where he did not do so would not fit into the collection. They are nothing but their stories, and their portrait is drawn from an interpretation of the stories, not the other way round. They are what Tzvetan Todorov

[30] Hist. 41 is such an exception. Eulenspiegel claims to be a soothsayer and, uttering trivialities, fills the members of a smith's household with enthusiasm.

[31] *Nasredddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, nos 364, 570, 320, and 564, in the order of the reactions.

[32] *Nasreddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, nos 587 and 443.

[33] *Nasreddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, nos 579 and 582.

[34] *Nasreddin Hodscha*, ed. by Marzolph, pp. 16–17.

[35] Idries Shah, *The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin / The Subtleties of the Inimitable Mulla Nasrudin* (London: Octagon Press, 2003). Hilary Kilpatrick suggests that Shah's reading may be a consequence of the Persian material on which he is concentrating.

calls *hommes récit*, which they would not be if they ever did anything more than just behaving like fools.[36]

Mapping the Mythical Universe

But what are fools? We have introduced them as others, as different from us, different from both the norm and the normal. This means that they have to be placed in a collective imagination that includes 'us' and that maybe allows a differentiation of types of fools and thus of Nasreddin and Eulenspiegel. The following two-dimensional model is eclectic rather than subscribing to one of the current myth theories.

The vertical axis *good–evil* has at its top the HERO, perhaps in a trickster-like connection with GOD. At the bottom, there is the VILLAIN, perhaps in a trickster-like connection with the DEVIL. The Old French *Chanson de Roland* would provide an example of this extension, even a double one: Roland, the principal hero, fights for Charlemagne, who, for his part, represents and fights for God. Ganelun, on the other hand, acts for the Sultan, representative of the Devil. In the middle of this axis, there is the point zero, where the narrator and the reader are positioned, and from where they regard the HERO and VILLAIN. Close to this point zero is the ADVENTURER, 'hero' of many stories without having the moral costume of the HERO. The implicit narrator and reader/listener are adventurers whose adventure is the story they experience. Burke's third position/actant in this so far only vertical universe is the FOOL, adding a horizontal axis to the model, since he is different from but not necessarily better or worse than average. Where it crosses the vertical one depends of course on the characterization of the Fool or a fool with respect to morality. If Burke himself defines the FOOL as someone who cannot fulfil the norm, then he tends to place him below zero, yet above the biblical fool from the Psalms (see the Introduction to this volume). Erasmus's 'fool in Christ' has to be placed far above zero, whereas the fool not to be held responsible for his acts, the fool who enjoys *fool's immunity*, but also the fool who as jester or clown and is defined and judged by his entertaining abilities, are all situated on the same moral level as the reader or the adventurer.[37] They are of course not identical, since the point zero is defined by the norms and the normality the fool per

[36] Tzvetan Todorov, *Poétique de la prose (choix) suivi de Nouvelles recherches sur le récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1980).

[37] Eulenspiegel is asked by the people from Magdeburg, 'daz er sült etwaz Abenthür treiben', that he should perform some *adventure* (*Ein kurtzweilig Lesen*, ed. by Lindow, Hist. 14).

(Burke's) definition does not fulfil. So we indeed need a horizontal axis that leads to the FOOL by leading away from the HERO–VILLAIN axis.

Is the FOOL situated to its left or to its right? This depends on how we define the horizontal axis. Because of the otherness of the fool, this is not an easy task, perhaps even impossible. In linguistics, however, a tendency is emerging that indicates the way. Assertions about language phenomena are being replaced by questions about these phenomena.[38] FOOLS are situated on both sides of the vertical axis according to subcategorization which, even if individual characters defy it, helps to discuss the place and the role of the FOOL in a more differentiated and subtle way. Following Burke, who, basing himself on O. E. Klapp, defines the FOOL as someone who is 'unable to do justice to the norms',[39] I propose to name the horizontal axis the *intellectual* one after an important norm system other than the moral one which defines the vertical axis. The intellectual axis leads from a mentally ill and a stupid or simpleton fool on the left to a cunning or even wise one on the right — both poles being as open to GOD or to the DEVIL as the vertical ones. Fools situated above zero, regardless whether to the left or to the right, belong to the good principle, whereas those situated below belong to the realm of evil.

Mikhail Bakhtin has identified a triad of actants he calls, borrowing terms from Russian folklore, *chut*, *plut*, and *durak*, among the main characters of the European novel of the 'second line', that is, the polyphonic popular novel, the Spanish picaresque novel, and Rabelais's giant novels about Gargantua and Pantagruel and about Panurge being its prototypes. The English translation offers *clown*, *rogue*, and *fool*; Guillemette Bolens recently criticized this choice, arguing for *fool*, *trickster*, and *lunatic* instead.[40] I follow Bolens preferring TRICKSTER to rogue, but I understand Bakhtin's naïve *durak* rather as SIMPLETON than as pathological lunatic. Most of all, I would stick to CLOWN, reserving FOOL rather for the hyperonym of all these terms in order to make all that has been written about 'the fool' in this volume and elsewhere readable and comparable. This proposition rests

[38] Proverbs, for example, all used to be defined as idiomatic; today the question of their idiomaticity has replaced this definition. Cf. Gertrud Gréciano, 'Zum System der Phrasemverwendung', in *Deutsche Phraseologie in Sprachsystem und Sprachverwendung*, ed. by Csaba Földes (Vienna: Edition Praesens, 1992), pp. 149–69 (p. 153).

[39] Burke, *Helden, Schurken und Narren*, p. 162, with reference to O[rin] E. Klapp, *Heroes, Villains and Fools: The Changing American Character* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 17.

[40] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*; Guillemette Bolens, 'Les Fous et dissidents de Bakhtine, version anglaise', in *'Fripon, bouffon, sot'*, ed. by Velmezova and Schwarz, pp. 201–20. See the whole volume for the discussion of Bakhtin's terms and concepts in different languages.

on the impression that Bakhtin offers highlighting examples of a common concept rather than exclusive definitions when he emphasizes the naïveté of the *durak*, the 'cheerful deceit' of the *plut*, and the *chut's* combination of both traits.[41] These characteristics do not of course cover the whole field; they can only serve as hints that fools can be stupid (SIMPLETON) or clever (TRICKSTER) or be the one and play the other (CLOWN). As Bakhtin overlooked what Michel Foucault calls the INSANE[42] as well as the HOLY FOOL treated by Erasmus and others, then on the left side of the scheme Bolens's LUNATIC and on the right side the WISE FOOL have to be added. The HOLY FOOL seems not to be a class but a specific combination of the SIMPLETON, the WISE FOOL, and the HERO.

This scheme now allows us to maintain the claim that Eulenspiegel and Nasreddin are (literary) fools and, on this basis, to ask what kind of fool they are. All the Eulenspiegel stories we have discussed here, numbers 12, 24, 29, 79, and 92, portray him as a CLOWN, entertaining the external audience and on two occasions the audience within the story (12 and 24), while in all five Historien he acts at the same time as a TRICKSTER, leaving victims behind him. Paul Radin's concept of the trickster that encompasses both the player of tricks and the one who, due to his marginal existence, is able to cross the threshold between different worlds, supports this classification.[43] At the most marked places in the book, at its very beginning and at its very end, where he is not yet or no longer able to play tricks, Eulenspiegel seems to attract strange events for which he cannot be held responsible. Hist. 1 relates how the baby is baptized three times, first the usual way, then when the drunken nurse falls into dirty water with him in her arms, and finally when he is washed back home. Hist. 95 explains why his dead body is not lying but standing in the grave: because the rope at the foot end of the coffin broke.

In anecdotes 132, 172, and 588, Nasreddin, too, is a CLOWN. In 172 and 272, he acts successfully as a TRICKSTER. Sometimes he shows such a strange view of the world that one must call him a SIMPLETON; sometimes we are invited to see him as a WISE FOOL.[44] Numbers 132, 284, and 588 pose the question of his intellectual capacities, 284 suggesting the WISE FOOL, 132 and 588 rather the

[41] Cf. Alexander Schwarz, 'Chut alors! Du narrateur et de son Narr', in *'Fripon, bouffon, sot'*, ed. by Velmezova and Schwarz, pp. 109–26.

[42] Pot, 'Des mots du fou', p. 90. See also Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Mentor Books, 1967), chap. 3.

[43] Cf. Radin, *The Trickster*.

[44] Shah seems to overestimate the occurrences of 'wise fool'.

SIMPLETON. Nasreddin, however, lacks Eulenspiegel's otherworldly aspect, as the corpus treats neither his birth nor times after his death. Nonetheless, to conceive Eulenspiegel as wise, as artists have done in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[45] is to misunderstand, when the early modern corpus is taken into account.

The Dynamics of the Fool

Having so far reconstructed Eulenspiegel's and Nasreddin's gestures and the emotions they arouse as well as their place(s) in a mythological universe, we can now try to combine both approaches and see if such places can be defined dynamically as repertoires of gesture. Looking for theoretical guidance, we become aware that there has been yet another static element on the path we have followed so far. The theoretical background of our definition of foolishness was the *script opposition* theory of humour. Werner Röcke has characterized it nicely as 'the conviction that in a joke the heterogeneous and fundamentally incompatible are combined and that this clash of disparate elements sparks off laughter'.[46] In his paper, this friendly portrait swiftly turns into harsh criticism. If we want to know if and how a joke works we cannot just read and analyse it semantically, but we have to observe its actual performance and see what happens. The difference between a joke's success and failure is so important for the relationship between the people involved in the joke-telling situation that the question if a joke works or not is indeed the main question about it. Röcke focuses his study on the period which interests us, but how does he get his data? By testing if and how late medieval joke collections 'imagine' the 'social procedure' of the jokes they document, if and how they explicitly or implicitly make clear their *function*.[47] The *performance* of a joke, the

[45] For instance, the Belgian novelist Charles de Coster and his novel published in 1867, *La Légende d'Ulenspiegel* (Brussels: Lacroix), and the Eulenspiegel monument in Kneitlingen with its 1949 inscription 'Hier kam zur Welt Till Eulenspiegel. Narr – Schelm – Weiser – ein Mensch' (Here was born Till Eulenspiegel. Fool – Prankster – Sage – A Human Being).

[46] 'die Ueberzeugung, daß im Witz Heterogenes und im Grunde Inkommensurables miteinander verbunden werde und sich an diesem Zusammenstoß des Disparaten das Lachen entzünde': Werner Röcke, 'Lizenzen des Witzes: Institution und Funktionsweisen der Fazetie im Spätmittelalter', in *Komische Gegenwelten*, ed. by Röcke and Neumann, pp. 79–101 (p. 79).

[47] Röcke, 'Lizenzen des Witzes', p. 83; 'sozialer Vorgang' of the joke is a borrowing from Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten*: *Studienausgabe*, vol. IV (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 9–219 (p. 132).

object desired, can only be assessed indirectly, via *performativity*, 'die Bezugnahme auf eine Performanz'.[48] What is most interesting in Röcke's going back to Freud at this point is the experience and 'imagination' that laughter can be 'painfully aggressive'.[49] At this point, things become really tricky; we have to clearly distinguish between aggressive jokes which may very well not work because of their aggressiveness and between aggressive laughter as indicator of a successful joke. Taking all this into account, we do not have to give up the *script opposition* theory of humour we used in the fools' contest section above but can use it to identify *potentially funny texts*. Additionally, their *performativity* has to be determined by including reactions in the texts and narrator's and author's comments in the texts and in paratexts like introductions.

In the *Eulenspiegel* text, things are quite clear. The narrator judges Eulenspiegel's behaviour as *Schalkheit*, *malice*, from the beginning drawing our attention to his aggressiveness. In the 'Vorred', he claims that he has collected the stories 'allein umb ein frölich Gemüt zu machen in schweren Zeiten, und die Lesenden und Zuhörenden mögen gute kurtzweilige Fröden und Schwänck daruß fabulleren' ('My only ambition is to create a happy feeling in hard times, so my readers and listeners may experience good, pleasant entertainment and fun'). Adding to this the book's success, we are entitled to speak of a *potentially funny text.* The kind of fun the book has to offer is called 'gut', which seems, if we consider Eulenspiegel's malice, not to exclude Freud's aggressive laughter. The (different) *Nasreddin* narrators create an impression of homogeneity of the text by refraining from any comment. Ulrich Marzolph, in his *Nasreddin* edition, does not render the paratexts of the editions from which he draws. He himself calls Nasreddin, as we have seen, a 'trickster with a thousand faces', alluding to Joseph Campbell's classical book about the myth of the hero.

The theories we have discussed so far focus on the clown aiming to produce laughter. The trickster has other aims. The dynamic, action-oriented theory of stratagems allows us to conceptualize the trickster's gesture, producing success for the user of stratagems and frustration for its victim. This theory comes from China and, in written form, dates back to around 1500, exactly when the first Eulenspiegel and Nasreddin collections were gathered. For a long time, however, it was only known in China. In 1988, the Swiss Sinologist Harro von Senger published

[48] Hans-Jürgen Bachorski and others, 'Performativität und Lachkultur in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit', in *Theorien des Performativen*, ed. by Erika Fischer-Lichte and Christoph Wulf, Paragrana, 10. 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), pp. 157–90 (p. 162).

[49] Röcke, 'Lizenzen des Witzes', p. 85.

for the first time in the West these thirty-six stratagems from China, providing an exhaustive array of examples and a commentary.[50] The stratagems are presented in the form of idioms or proverbs, including one that corresponds with Bakhtin's definition of the *chut*, the clown, stratagem 27: 'Feigning foolisness'. Eulenspiegel does not have a favourite stratagem; his ninety-six stories can rather be read as an illustration of the whole list.[51] In Hist. 79, both the innkeeper and Eulenspiegel utilize stratagem 7, 'To create something out of nothing'. I have proposed to reconstruct stratagems as clever and unexpected ways of deviating syllogisms: we expect that an initial situation as described in a special premise A, will according to the general premise B, lead to a final situation as formulated in a conclusion C, but a ruse produces C_2 instead. In Hist. 79, the innkeeper thinks that if his guest says that he is no longer hungry (A_2), then the contract of providing food (B) will oblige him to pay the bill (C). Eulenspiegel introduces another rule (B_2) 'you pay for what you get', or rather 'you pay in the way you got something', allowing him to conclude without paying (C_2). Eulenspiegel has a distinct predilection for manipulations of (B).[52] This appears also in Hist. 12, when he reinterprets the formula of the bet 'in the middle of the church', or even in 24, when, at the Polish court, he expands the rules of the contest beyond decency. Eulenspiegel acts according to rules his victims or the audience of his stories did not think of but that are difficult to refute.

Nasreddin, in no. 272, starts from the general premise (B) that lawyers are corrupt. The judge shares this premise, which obviously guides him from Nasreddin's pointing to his pocket (A) to the hope for money (C). But Nasreddin reinterprets A into a threat (A_2), actualizing another principle (B_2) that people are easily intimidated, logically leading to a judgement in his favour (C_2) without paying. Here, Nasreddin overthrows the whole syllogism, starting from A. In the other stratagemic anecdote in our small corpus, no. 172 about the donkey, he does the same,

[50] Harro von Senger, *Strategeme*, 2 vols (Bern: Scherz, 1988–2000). The first volume has been translated into twelve languages, including Chinese (1990), English (1991), and Turkish (1996). The strategem theory has been applied to Eulenspiegel in Alexander Schwarz, 'Reineke Fuchs, Till Eulenspiegel und das Problem der List in Deutschland', in *Die List*, ed. by Harro von Senger, Edition Suhrkamp, 2039 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 304–20; and Schwarz, 'Listig in die Neuzeit', in *Text im Kontext: Anleitung zur Lektüre deutscher Texte der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Alexander Schwarz and Laure Abplanalp, Tausch, 9 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 245–56; and Schwarz, '96 Historien: 36 Strategeme = Eulenspiegel?', *Eulenspiegel-Jahrbuch*, 44 (2004), 77–90.

[51] Schwarz, '96 Historien'.

[52] Schwarz, 'Reineke Fuchs', pp. 310–11.

starting this time from a new rule (B_2) that humans, especially clergymen, should have more credibility than animals, replacing the neighbours' rule (B) that one's own senses are more reliable than the words of other people. Nasreddin acts in a way that makes his victims and his audience see the world and the rules that govern it in a different way.

Summarizing, one could define the FOOL's repertoire as strange, 'ugly', but not 'bad' behaviour that will never find its full logical explanation. The behaviour characteristic of the different types of fool can be categorized as follows:

> SIMPLETON: actions that lack experience and brains, obvious mistakes that miraculously can lead to success, as in the fairy tales about the three brothers;
> LUNATIC: strange actions 'too big to be a mistake', following the rules of some different system from ours giving the impression of insanity. Meta-communication does not solve the communicative problems because the lunatic is trapped in his world (or: the 'normal' one is trapped in his);
> WISE FOOL: foolish behaviour that when looked at more closely calls for admiration and invites one to rethink one's own attitudes;
> CLOWN: funny (bifocal) behaviour, skilful imitation of the simpleton's actions, production of nonsense;
> TRICKSTER: tricks based on using stratagems; is connected with some other world we know of but from which we are excluded.

Gesture and emotion are the main factors in any semiotic process, in any activity creating meaning (*semiosis*). It starts with someone's gestural or verbal behaviour (signs) in a communicative situation that would find its meaning in the emotional reactions it evokes, like laughter or aggression in the case of foolish behaviour, or more generally, of different behaviour, of marginal behaviour. This model draws on the American pragmatists' behaviouristic semiotics, relating signs, in our case foolish behaviour, as stimuli, with the emotional reactions as the response to them, or, in C. S. Peirce's terms, as their *interpretant*,[53] combining it with modern performativity theory that has grown itself out of a combination of John Austin's speech act theory and Paul Zumthor's discussion of medieval *mouvance*.[54] The distinctive feature and main advantage of the pragmatism–performativity merger is the

[53] The best introduction to this semiotic concept is still John W. Morris, *The Pragmatic Movement in American Philosophy* (New York: Braziller, 1970).

[54] John L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972); cf. the Introduction of this volume.

dynamics of the sign, finding gesture and behaviour not only in the interpretant but also in the presentation of the sign, in its performance. Reading old texts this way makes our reading body resuscitate other bodies: the body of the performer who aimed to satisfy his audience; the bodies of the people who formed the original audience. However, we need another word to define these people because their role is not only auditory. Their laughter leaves behind, as Röcke and Neumann have it, 'exhausted bodies, shortness of breath and eyes full of tears'.[55]

According to the pragmatists, this kind of laughter is all that can be said about the meaning of the performance of funny acts. Yet the pragmatists dreamed of the establishing of a new and better society via the right stimuli. It would, however, not have been the idea of these philosophers to build a more foolish society. This is not the aim and the message of authors and performers of Eulenspiegel and Nasreddin stories, either. The sixteenth-century *Lalebuch* (1597) shows unmistakeably where a society of fools would lead to: (self-)destruction.[56] The pragmatists' concept of consequences as meaning only allows us to reconstruct a history of the fool and of foolish behaviour on the basis of the reactions it provokes. Sometimes we will have a hard time tracing these reactions; sometimes we will have reasons to criticize them; sometimes we will register them with little urge to respond to them as stimuli for our own work or life. We might, however, also come to the conclusion that there are moments when foolish behaviour like Eulenspiegel's or Nasreddin's is *just the right stimulus*. Their flourishing literary and touristic survival indicates that, in the Muslim world as well as in Northern Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, identification with the two fools is greater than with their victims. Identification with someone or something funny seems to me to be a good thing when humour tends to get lost, as in Muslim-Christian relations.

[55] *Komische Gegenwelten*, ed. by Röcke and Neumann, 'Preface', p. 7.

[56] *Das Lalebuch*, ed. by Stefan Ertz (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993).

After the Laughter: Discipline Through Narration. The Fool's Didactics in Wolfgang Büttner's Jocular Prose Tales (*Schwänke*) Featuring Claus Narr (1572)

Peter Glasner

The *Schwank* heroes such as Dil Ulenspiegel and the Lalen or rather Schildbürger owe their place in cultural memory not least to their prettified successors in children's literature. When prominent authors team up with ingenious illustrators, as in the case of Ulen- or Eulenspiegel, the survival of fictitious jester figures is particularly secured inside as well as outside the literary field — for example in proverbs and carnival traditions. In this context, one only has to mention Erich Kästner's *Till Eulenspiegel* which was first published in 1938 and illustrated by Walter Trier in order to demonstrate the continued existence of foolish outsiders, rogues, and jesters of the late Middle Ages in modern literature. That Kästner dismisses the concept of the fop, fool, or (roguish) jester in favour of a clownish figure, which is more suitable for children of the present day, shows something more: the fool and his related stereotypes, the rogue, the cuckoo, and the jester, are genuine medieval characters who had their heydays in the comical narratives of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, in satires on scholars or rather humanists and in polemics of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

A case different from that of Eulenspiegel's tricks is that of the *Schwänke* of the Saxon jester Claus Narr (*c.* 1430–1515),[1] which have widely sunk into oblivion

[1] (Wolfgang Büttner), *Sechs hundert / sieben vnd zwantzig Historien / Von Claus Narren. Feine schmimpfliche wort vnd Reden / die Erbare Ehrenleut Clausen abgemerckt / vnd nachgesagt haben*

since the eighteenth century although Claus Narr was indeed already as popular in the sixteenth century as Eulenspiegel or Faust.[2] In this case, modern adaptations and retellings are completely missing, and even collections of comic narrations, as they can be found in the 'Humoristischer Hausschatz' of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, no longer include the jocular prose tales of Claus Narr. Apparently, this is also caused by the aesthetic peculiarity of this sixteenth-century *Schwank*-collection which shall be traced in the following analysis. The focus will be on the figure of the fool, Claus, an attested historical figure as a jester at the Saxon courts at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The *Schwank*-collection *Sechs hundert / sieben / und zwantzig Historien / Von / Claus Narren*[3] can be traced back to the Protestant priest Wolfgang Büttner (born around 1522, died before 1596),[4] who also wrote *Eine deutsche Logik* (1574), *Epitome historiarum oder christliche Geschichten* (1576), *Historische Catechismus = Predigten*, and a rhymed *kleiner Katechismus für die Wandersleute auf der Straße und die Handwerksgesellen auf der Werkstatt* (1572).[5] Gervinus and Schmitz have hinted at the fact that Büttner does not at all openly reveal himself as the author of these works. Rather, his authorship had to be deduced from the acrostic MAGISTER VOLFGANG BVTTNER PFRRER [sic] ZV VOLFFERSTET of the *Oratio Authoris* attached to the text. The Latin final sentence of Büttner's *Schwank*-preamble corresponds with the acrostic as the initial letters of the words also contain a hidden reference to him: '*Malis vndique Bonisque patet: volens*': M[agister] v[olfgang] B[üttner] p[arochus] vol[ferstetenis].[6] The obscured

/ Zur Bürgerlichen vnd Christlichen Lere / wie andere Apologen / dienstlich vnd förderlich. Mit lustigen Reimen gedeutet vnd erkleret. ANNO 1572. Zu Eisleben gedruckt / Bey Vrban Gaubisch / Wonhafftig auff dem Graben.

[2] Heinz-Günter Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch von Claus Narr: Mit einem Beitrag zur Sprache der Eisleber Erstausgabe von 1572*, Deutsche Volksbücher in Faksimiledrucken; Reihe B Untersuchungen zu den deutschen Volksbüchern, 1 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1990), p. 1.

[3] For quotations taken from Büttner's *Schwank*-book, which shows only an incomplete and moreover inaccurate counting of sheets, references will be given from my own pagination. English translations in this paper are my own.

[4] On Büttner's biography and works, see Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, pp. 24–25.

[5] Cf. 'Historien von Claus Narr', in *Volksbücher und Schwänke des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts Nebst Proben aus den Gesprächen des Desiderius Erasmus, aus dem Traktat: Von den losen Füchsen, dem Mayenlob des Caspar Scheidt und dem Teatrum Diabolorum. Auswahl aus den Quellen und seltenen Ausgaben. Mit biographisch-literarischen Einleitungen, sprachlichen und sachlichen Notizen*, ed. by Ignaz Hub (Nuremberg: Ebner, 1857), pp. 382–404 (p. 382).

[6] Cf. Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 23.

authorship should be seen less as a humanistic gimmick than as a consequence of the concern voiced by Büttner himself in the preamble 'daß man dieses Buch, da es von einem Narren handelte, gerade ihm, dem Pfarrer, zum Vorwurf machen könnte'[7] (that he particularly, being a priest, could be blamed for this book since it deals with a fool).

His collection of jocular prose tales, which is to be described in more detail later on, is mainly oriented towards an intention specific of literature: edification through reading. The character of the fool, the composition of the *Schwank*-book, and the ethos behind it, and their interaction, shall be analysed. In doing so, the frictions and tensions between the figure of the protagonist and the narrated content on the one hand and their didactic use and *Überformung* (imposition of a dominating superstructure) on the other will then be the centre of attention so that it can finally be shown that the fictitiousness of narrating can in the end never be completely controlled or secured with regard to intended effects. Its genuine aesthetics result in fact from this very surplus which is never fully captured by paratextually displayed narrative purposes. Nevertheless, the didactic processing of the narrative in turn anchors the narrative in specific contemporary contexts, which has to forfeit its relevance and reading pleasure to the same extent as it loses its topicality with the passing of time. With this focus, Büttner's *Schwank*-book will first be regarded in the context of current and previous research, and afterwards the self-statements of the *Schwank* collector, reteller, and narrator Büttner will be confronted with the narrated content and its interpretation(s). Thus, the main interest of this article is to provide a case study of the literary formation of interests: after the laughter there comes discipline through the telling of jocular prose tales in the sixteenth century. The rich diversity and the intentional effects of Büttner's fool figure and novel can only be characterized after the dimensions of the cultural-historical meaning of the fool at the turn of the late Middle Ages to the early modern age have been outlined.

On the Idea of the Fool in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Age

In his definition of the fool figure, Werner Mezger mainly stresses its deviant character:

[7] Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 23.

> Als N.en galten seit dem SpätMA sämtl. Personen, die durch abweichende Verhaltensformen, körperl. oder geistige Defekte, insbes. aber durch Ignoranz gegenüber der christl. Heilslehre dem herrschenden Ordogedanken nicht entsprachen.[8]
>
> [Since the Middle Ages, all people were regarded as fools who did not comply with the current concept of *ordo* due to deviant forms of behaviour, physical or mental defects, and especially due to their ignorance of the Christian doctrine of salvation.]

In this context, society's attitude towards the other as deviance is per se always ambivalent. Jacques Heers describes this aspect as follows:

> Die Haltung der Menschen gegenüber dem Wahnsinnigen, dem Besessenen, dem Epileptiker, aber auch gegenüber dem Verunstalteten, der unter schweren Behinderungen leidet, erscheint dem Historiker der Zivilisationen und der Mentalitäten fast immer zwiespältig, oft widersprüchlich. Abscheu, Entsetzen, Neugier und Belustigung, Mitleid oder Achtung angesichts des mit einem übernatürlichen, göttlichen Zeichen behafteten Wesens?[9]
>
> [People's attitude towards the madman, the demoniac, the epileptic, but also towards the deformed who suffers from severe disabilities nearly always seems ambivalent, often contradictory, to the historian of civilizations and mentalities. Repulsion, horror, curiosity and amusement, pity or respect facing this creature afflicted with a supernatural, divine mark?]

That physical, psychological, and religious deviance was theologically explosive and thus socially precarious in the early modern age is obvious since a fool with these characteristics per se threatened the concept of man being made in the image of God (Genesis 1. 29). Seeing the incorporation of deviance as a breach of rules with regard to reason and spiritual truths, one already gets an idea of why the fool figure would be in particularly great demand in satires on humanists and the polemics of the Reformation. Hans-Jürgen Bachorski and Werner Röcke take their definition of the fool a step further and emphasize the disturbing perturbation emanating from fools by stressing the uncontrollable and contingent character of foolishness. According to them, fools do not have command

> über sich selbst, sondern werden durch äußere Mächte getrieben, seien es nun der Wahnsinn oder das Böse, die Freude am Tabubruch oder an den verschiedenen Öffnungen des Körpers. Sie besitzen keine Identität mit sich selbst, keine Ruhe und keine Zufriedenheit mit dem Erreichten oder mit Gottes Gaben.[10]

[8] Werner Mezger, 'Narr', in *LexMA*, VI (1993), cols 1023–24.

[9] Jacques Heers, *Vom Mummenschanz zum Machttheater: Europäische Festkultur im Mittelalter*, trans. by Grete Osterwald (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1986), p. 164.

[10] Hans-Jürgen Bachorski and Werner Röcke, 'Narrendichtung', in *Deutsche Literatur: Eine Sozialgeschichte*, vol. II: *Von der Handschrift zum Buchdruck: Spätmittelalter, Reformation, Humanismus 1320–1572*, ed. by Horst Albert Glaser (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1991), pp. 203–13 (p. 204).

> [of themselves but are driven by external forces, be it madness or evil, the pleasure they take in violating taboos or in the various orifices. They do not have self-identity, no calmness and no contentment with the things accomplished or with the gifts granted by God.]

Historical iconography first meets with the fool also in theological contexts such as illuminated psalter manuscripts:

> Seit dem 13. Jhd. wurden dort die Anfangsworte von Ps 52 (und 13), Dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus' mit einer Initialminiatur versehen, die obligatorisch den 'insipiens' oder 'stultus' zeigt.[11]

> [Since the thirteenth century the initial words of Ps 52 (and 13) 'Dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus' were there provided with an initial miniature which invariably shows the 'insipiens' or 'stultus'.]

While fools as real persons appeared in social reality as outsiders and jesters at courts and in carnival traditions, one of the most prevalent iconographic types is the 'Confrontation of the Fool with the Wise King David', which illustratively cofounded the medieval concept of the office of the court jester.[12] In the D-initial of French psalter manuscripts dating from the years between 1220 and 1230, a half-naked *insipiens* and King David are facing one another in a 'Disputation on the Existence of God'.[13] Dramatic character and dialogic disposition are also the two main characteristics which Michel Foucault highlights concerning the relationship between premodern society and deviance caused by illness:

> In the Middle Ages and until the Renaissance, man's dispute with madness was a dramatic debate in which he confronted the secret powers of the world; the experience of madness was clouded by images of the Fall and the Will of God, of the Beast and the Metamorphosis, and of all the marvellous secrets of Knowledge.[14]

The fool's and the king's gestures are significant for the depiction of a disputation scene between wisdom and atheism. King David usually holds a stick similar to a

[11] Mezger, 'Narr', col. 1024; cf. Angelika Gross, 'Das Bild des Narren: Von Psalm 52 zu Sebastian Brant', in *Bild und Abbild vom Menschen im Mittelalter: Akten der Akademie Friesach 'Stadt und Kultur im Mittelalter'*, Friesach (Kärnten), 9–13 September 1998, ed. by Elisabeth Vavra, Schriftenreihe der Akademie Friesach, 6 (Klagenfurt: Wieser, 1999), pp. 273–91.

[12] Cf. Werner Mezger, *Hofnarren im Mittelalter: Vom tieferen Sinn eines seltsamen Amts* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1981); Heinz-Günter Schmitz, *Das Hofnarrenwesen der frühen Neuzeit: Claus Narr von Torgau und seine Geschichten*, Dichtung – Wahrheit – Sprache, 1 (Münster: Lit, 2004).

[13] Schmitz, *Das Hofnarrenwesen der frühen Neuzeit*.

[14] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Mentor, 1967), 'Preface', p. xi.

sceptre. Analogously, the fool holds a cudgel as a symbol for his foolish egocentricity which makes him ignorant to God and man.[15] The fool as *insipiens* stages his doubts about God in selfish jocularity with his forefinger raised heavenwards. The gesture of King David is raised warningly as a sign of curbing and takes its firm insistence from the seriousness of the glance with which David tries to calm the sinful fool. The gesture repertoire which antithetically refers one to the other — the fool's pointing gesture and the King's warning gesture of conversion — thus already anticipates the exorcistic scenarios of the depiction of fools during the Reformation. Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the former initial was eventually promoted to a full miniature. In a psalter owned by Charles VIII, dating from the late fifteenth century, the iconographic tradition of depicting the fool can be seen as having reached a climax: the antipode of King David who is clad in a coat furred with ermine here wears the costume of a courtly jester of the late Middle Ages consisting of a cap equipped with bells and donkey's ears, a two-coloured robe, and the marotte. Due to his doubts about God, the fool's pointing gesture misses — allegorically — God. King David on his knees and with his hands folded can be seen in full accordance with medieval depictions of rulers who are mainly characterized by their relation to God (divine right) and their Christian virtue.

The buffoon and jester stand in connection with the distinction between the *artificial* and the *natural* fool, as it can be found in the famous depiction of a triumphal procession for Emperor Maximilian I. In this series of woodcarvings which was created by Hans Burgkmair between 1516 and 1519, the *artificial* fools and the *natural* fools with their irreparable physical and mental defects are travelling in different carriages. The depiction of the jokers in their splendidly decorated carriages shows them making wild gestures: they are shouting at and waving to the spectator, they are handing each other drinks, they are pulling their hair and pointing at each other. Hence, the gestures of the artificial fools have dramatic traits: the raised hand which is intended to emphasize the shout at the audience and to draw the observer's attention to the fools, the staged violence which is meant to entertain as an exhibition fight, and the pointing at other showmen. In contrast to the wild gesturing their artificial 'colleagues' put on, the gestures and mien of the natural fools are depicted in a more cautious way: a fool who with his three-fold cap with numerous donkey's ears is kitted out as the fools' pope is staring blankly in front of himself, leaning on a cane. Two fools are depicted making music with a flute and a jew's-harp. With regard to gesture, both groups of fools have two

[15] Cf. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, chap. 1.

obvious things in common: on the one hand their — pretended or real — violence, which in the case of the natural fools can be seen from the fact that the flutist is being beaten, and on the other the dramatic gesture of pointing and reference which the jester not only uses to mock but also to give serious pieces of advice and to indicate deficiencies.

The grim debates during the Reformation adopted the fools' gesture for a polemical exchange of blows in which particular emotions, such as the hate for dissenters and followers of a different faith, were stoked up. In this context, a graphical representation is well known in which Thomas Murner, a Franciscan and adversary of Luther, demonizes the fool figure and treats him as a quasi devil. Here, Luther as the personification of Protestant doctrine is portrayed as 'gottferne[r] Narr im Sinne des Insipiens aus Ps 52'[16] (a godless fool in the sense of the *insipiens* of Ps 52). Displayed as a cat in a Franciscan habit, Murner has knocked Luther, who is wearing a fool's cap, to the ground and is now standing on him drawing foolish doctrines, all of them little fools, out of his mouth. The obsessed body of the fool and the gesture of the exorcist are dialogically referring to each other in the expulsion ritual. According to exorcistic practice, the demonic suggestions can only be expelled from the mad fool by means of ritualized gestures such as 'sinnbildl. Handlungen (Aushauchen, Ausspucken nach Westen, Wegstoßen, Handauflegung, Kreuzzeichen) u. durch Worte (Anrufung des Namen Jesu, oft mit Lesungen aus der Schrift, Verfluchung des bösen Feindes, Gebot zu weichen usw)'[17] (allegorical actions (exhaling, spitting westwards, pushing away, laying on of hands, sign of the cross) and through words (invocation of Christ, often combined with lessons from the Scriptures, cursing of the evil foe, command to yield)). Such exorcistic scenarios are based on notions as they are represented in Mark 1. 23–28 for instance: Jesus expels evil spirits and demons through invocation.[18]

[16] Mezger, 'Narr', col. 1027.

[17] F. Schubert, 'Exorzismus', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edn (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1993–2001), III, col. 915.

[18] Two related passages from the Gospel according to Mark can be read as descriptions of the picture showing Murner's exorcism of the Luther-fool: 'And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him' (Mark 1. 25–26). Jesus's promise of salvation at the end of the Gospel according to Mark belongs to the conceptual realm of the exorcism of demons: 'And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; [...] they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover' (Mark 16. 17–18); *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, Standard Text Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

That the fool himself was also imagined as a warning character is shown by a reformatory one-sheet print displaying verses of Hans Sachs which dates from the year 1543. The fool with his traditional costume, a donkey-eared Gugel with a cockscomb, and a dramatic gesture is standing between the highest representatives of spiritual and secular power. Facing emperor, king, and the upper nobility, his gesture is a pointing gesture which warns against the depravation of the corrupt clergy:

> Der auch lang zeit geeffet hat
> Doch als eim gaistlichen schein
> Als muest ir jm gehorsam sein
> Vnd alles glauben was sie leren
> Dar mit detten ji schetz sie meren.[19]
>
> [He who has for a long time duped people
> by appearing as a clergyman
> as if you had to be obedient to him
> and to believe everything they [*sic*] teach
> with that they [*sic*] have augmented their treasures.]

Here, the fool is not the incorporation of unreasonableness but its exact counterpart, namely the medium of wisdom and truth: 'Denn Wie man denn sagt vor alten tagen | Kinder und Narren of war sagen' (p. 48) (Since, as the old saying goes, children and fools often tell the truth).

At the turn of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the fool figure was thus far from uniformly comprehensible but had long since become a contradictory and contextual figure which is particularly suitable for polemical exchanges of blows, the defamation of enemies, and didactic purposes, be it as a negative example or as the wise, warning, or exorcistic fool. All three ways of using the fool and its iconographic tradition are essential for the hero of Büttner's jocular prose tales.

Claus Narr and Science

Claus Narr is the historical character of a jester who presumably was brought to court at the time when Frederick the Gentle (1412–64) ruled the electoral court of Saxony and who died in 1515 aged nearly ninety. Pictorial representations by unknown engravers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries show the portrait of a seemingly moronic person with a strong overbite, an asymmetrical eye area,

[19] All quotations are taken from Mezger, *Hofnarren im Mittelalter*, here p. 48.

drooping cheeks, and a bulbous nose. These depictions which supposedly go back to a picture by Hans Lautensack only too clearly present a natural fool:

> dem [aber] zugetraut wurde, aufgrund seiner Einfalt einen direkten Zugang zu höheren Einsichten bis zur Kraft der Prophezeiung zu besitzen. In beiden Drucken werden die Eigenschaften des *natürlichen* Narren in Eckmedaillons bzw. an den Basamenten der Eckpfeiler zusammengefasst: *Veritas*, *Prudentia*, *Fama*, *Simplicitas Donum Dei*.[20]
>
> [whom one [nevertheless] thought capable of possessing direct access to higher insights up to the power of prophesy due to his simple-mindedness. In both prints, the features of the *natural* fool are summarized in corner medallions or on the basements of the corner pillars: *veritas*, *prudentia*, *fama*, *simplicitas donum dei* [truth, prudence, fame, simple-mindedness as a gift from God].]

In the sixteenth century, Claus Narr's *Schwänke* were as popular as those of Eulenspiegel. That may also be due to the fact that Claus Narr was already mentioned a long time before Büttner's collection by Johannes Staupitz (1516/17), Murner (1522), or Paracelsus (1530) and that he found his way into numerous 'Exempel-, Sprichwörter- und Schwanksammlungen des 16. Jahrhunderts'[21] (sixteenth-century collections of examples, proverbs, and jocular prose tales). Additionally, plots featuring Claus Narr are also used as narrative subject matter by Hans Sachs and are in many aspects reminiscent of anecdotes by Bebel and Kirchhoff.[22] Even Martin Luther 'erinnert sich in seinen Tischreden der 30er und 40er Jahre mehrfach an ihn und gibt Geschichten von ihm zum Besten'[23] (remembers him several times in his after-dinner speeches of the thirties and forties and tells stories about him).

The *Geschichte der Hofnarren* by Karl Friedrich Flögel which was published posthumously in 1789 undoubtedly belongs to the most prominent beginnings of scientific occupation with fools in general as well as with Claus Narr in particular,

[20] Lutz S. Malke, 'Nachruf auf Narren', in *Narren: Porträts, Feste, Sinnbilder, Schwankbücher und Spielkarten aus dem 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Lutz S. Malke (Leipzig: Faber & Faber, 2001), pp. 9–57 (p. 19).

[21] Heinz-Günter Schmitz, 'Claus Narr und seine Zunft: Erscheinungsformen und Funktionen des Hofnarren im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit', in *Mein ganzer Körper ist Gesicht: Groteske Darstellungen in der europäischen Kunst und Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. by Katrin Kröll and Hugo Steger, Litterae, 26 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Wissenschaft, 1994), pp. 385–99 (p. 387).

[22] Cf. Franz Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 'Ueber Klaus Narr und M. Bütner', *Archiv für Litteraturgeschichte*, 6 (1877), 277–328 (p. 284).

[23] Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 'Ueber Klaus Narr'.

both in the cultural and in the literary sciences.[24] Flögel, professor of Philosophy at the Royal Knights' Academy in Liegnitz and assessor at the Royal Scientific Society in Frankfurt/Oder,[25] conceives his work about the fools as the second part of his *Geschichte des Groteskkomischen*. The *Geschichte der Hofnarren* is in turn divided into two parts, the first of which traces the cultural-historical relevance of the fool, his costume, attributes, and office, as well as the historical heydays of his appreciation by secular and ecclesiastical lords and in fools' feasts. In the second part, Flögel offers a far-reaching longitudinal account of the jester's cultural history, starting with the Greeks and Romans and including the 'Lustigmacher bei Orientalischen Völkern' (jokers with oriental peoples), 'bei griechischen Kaisern' (with Greek emperors), 'an deutschen Höfen' (at German courts), and in various German regions and European countries.[26]

In Flögel's broad cultural history of the fool's office, it is not surprising to also encounter a section about Claus Narr, whom Flögel calls Klaus von Ranstet. Flögel starts with listing the employers of our jester: He claims that Claus was not only in service to Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, but was first employed as jester by Elector Ernest who died in 1486 then by Elector Albrecht, who died in 1500, as well as by Archbishop Ernest of Magdeburg, who died in 1513, and finally by the above-mentioned Frederick of Saxony.[27]

Although Flögel first endeavours to secure the facts concerning Claus Narr's living conditions, it is nevertheless not untypical of his meticulousness and collector's passion to finally blur the dividing line between historical-biographical facts and alleged biographical data of fools as it is offered by literary tradition. The same procedure can be found in Ignaz Hub's account, who in his search for facts for the historical biography of Claus Narr also resorts to the *Schwank*-book itself: 'Claus Narr, von welchem Hans Sachs schon 1560 "Drey Schwenke" [...] erzählt, wurde zu Ranstedt in Meissen geboren "von armen und einfältigen Leuten" (Historien Th. 1, S. 1), von wo er um 1486 an den kurfürstlichen Hof kam'[28] (Claus Narr, about whom Hans Sachs already told *Drey Schwenke* [three jocular prose tales] in

[24] Karl Friedrich Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren: Mit Kupfern* (Liegnitz: Siegert, 1789).

[25] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, title page.

[26] Flögel sometimes also transgresses the Eurocentric perspective when he writes about the 'Hofnarren des Montezuma' (jesters of Montezuma), the 'Narren der Kamtschadalen' (fools of the Kamtschadalen), or even the 'Possenreißer der Neger' (buffoons of the negroes) (cf. Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, pp. 162–70).

[27] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, p. 283.

[28] *Volksbücher und Schwänke*, ed. by Hub, p. 383.

1560, was born to 'poor and simple-minded people' in Ranstedt in Meissen (*Historien* Th. 1, p. 1), from where he came to the electoral court around 1486). That fact and fiction are particularly difficult to distinguish in fools' biographies is already an issue in the oral tradition of the corresponding *Schwank* repertoire which has transferred anecdotes of other protagonists to Claus Narr so that 'Wahrheit und Dichtung unauflösbar miteinander verknüpft waren'[29] (truth and fiction are indissolubly tied together). Heinz Günter Schmitz describes the influence of oral tradition on the fool figure Claus in the following way:

> Zur Zeit Büttners war jedenfalls Claus schon eine mehr legendäre als historische Gestalt, eine Erzählfigur, die — was der Zeit freilich nicht bewußt wurde — längst nicht mehr den wirklichen historischen Claus, sondern mehr schon einen idealen Claus repräsentierte, der als Verkörperung des Hofnarren schlechthin, als Prototyp eines Hofnarren empfunden wurde.[30]
>
> [In Büttner's times, Claus had already become a legendary rather than historical figure, a narrated character who — which was, however, not realized at the time — had for a long time ceased to represent the real historical Claus and had begun to display an ideal Claus who was regarded to be the incorporation of the fool par excellence, the prototype of a fool.]

Büttner's *Schwank*-book about Claus Narr only has a loose biographical framework;[31] it starts with Claus's family background and parents' house and finishes with his death. The biographical aspect — the narrative content of twenty-six tales is after all situated in Claus's youth — is however only one structuring factor of this *Schwank* repertoire, which is not consequently pursued. In contrast to this, Schmitz stresses another but hidden structuring principle: the twenty-five histories of the third chapter

> beziehen sich [...] nämlich auf christliche Feste und Festtagsbräuche und sind so angeordnet, daß sie den Kreislauf des Jahres beschreiben: beginnend mit dem Martinstag, über Neujahr, Weihnachten, Unschuldige Kinder, Dreikönige, Fastnacht, bis hin zum Johannistag führt Büttner den Narren durch das Jahr.[32]

[29] Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 1.

[30] Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 1.

[31] It starts with Claus Narr's birth and youth, recounts *seine angeborne Stoliditet* (his inherent stolidity), which procures him an employment at the electoral court, and ends with his death. However, the biographical data is 'als Ordnungsprinzip nicht weiter genutzt' (not further used as an organizing principle): Schmitz, 'Claus Narr und seine Zunft', p. 388.

[32] Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 47.

> [in fact refer to Christian feasts and holiday customs and are arranged in such a way as to describe the course of the year: starting with Martinmas, continuing with New Year's Eve, Christmas, Holy Innocents' Day, Epiphany, Shrovetide up to the Feast of John, Büttner leads the fool through the year.]

In the following chapters however, Büttner again uses disparate structuring criteria.

To 'ensure order' in a social-moral sense is the main task of the epimythia added by Büttner to every *Schwank* which, as a *bourgeois and Christian doctrine*, form a ubiquitous framework of the narrative. Thus, with a preaching attitude and sometimes even with a verve reminiscent of exorcisms, the author constantly reminds the reader of his presence. The socially provocative potential of the fool in society only surfaces in the reaction of the father who is all too glad to leave his son with the Elector because he disturbs the peace of the village. According to Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Büttner even interspersed Latin sentences, 'wo er, z.B. aus Gründen der Schamhaftigkeit, für einen Theil seiner Leser unverständlich sein will'[33] (where he wants to keep things incomprehensible for a part of his readership, for reasons of bashfulness for instance).

One finds in Flögel's book the childhood *Schwank*, which recounts how the Elector takes notice of Claus and his ability to be a (court) jester, seamlessly attached to the list of Claus Narr's employers. Curiosity and foolishness are narratively presented as Claus's distinctive features. The narrative recounts that Claus Narr, who is herding his father's geese, wants to see the Elector with his many horses and carriages on his way through the area. However, in order not to lose the geese, Claus Narr pushes them with their necks under his belt. The simpleminded boy thus fitted out with poultry arouses the laughter and favour of his later lord, who 'urteilte aber gleichwohl, er [Claus Narr] habe einen natürlichen Beruf zum Narren'[34] (judged anyway that his [Claus Narr's] natural vocation was to be a fool).

In Büttner's *Schwank*-book of 1572, two prominent differences in the account of the initial boyhood *Schwank* catch the reader's eye. First, in Büttner's version it is not Elector Ernest but Frederick the Wise who discovers that Claus is predestined to be a jester. Secondly, Flögel's abridged renarration of the first encounter of Elector and future jester deprives the reader of both the crucial punchline of Büttner's first *Schwank* and the attached lesson:[35] in Büttner's *Schwank*-book of 1572, Claus, who is draped with strangled geese, does not only appear as a fool who

[33] Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 'Ueber Klaus Narr', p. 293.

[34] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, p. 284.

[35] The preceding first paragraph only recounts Claus's birth and family background in one sentence without narratively developing a punchline typical of the jocular prose tale.

has throttled the geese entrusted to him in order not to lose them. Rather, the laughing Elector sees the 'fool in the coat of feathers' with the crook in his hands as a Jacobian monk draped with shells or as a strange Carthusian.

The Elector compensates Claus's father for the loss of the geese and requests permission to employ his son as court jester. The father — relieved of the burden to have to educate a joker — gladly agrees to be rid of the natural fool: 'sehr gern, Gnädiger Herr, ich würde dadurch eines grossen Verdrusses überhoben, denn der Junge ist mir nichts nütze, in meinem Hause macht er nichts als Unruh, und durch seine Possen wiegelt er das ganze Dorf auf'[36] (With much pleasure, my lord, I would thus be absolved from a great annoyance since the boy is not in any way useful to me. He only makes trouble in my house and provokes the whole village with his practical jokes). That this incident can also be found in Büttner's *Schwank*-collection, albeit under the title 'Claus stecket Gensslein unter seinen Gürtel' (Claus tucks little geese under his belt), stresses a second aspect: the biographical details of fools are modelled on *Schwank* fiction whereas previous research has tried to read historical-biographical facts into fictional narratives. In Flögel's *Geschichte der Hofnarren* the fictional first meeting of Elector and fool is presented as fact.

Nevertheless, it is the lesson added by Büttner to each narrative unit, each proverb, or each of Claus Narr's *Schwänke* which constitutes the main difference between this *Schwank*-collection and the more popular *Ulenspiegel* book for instance. Already the mere mention of Claus's real or fictitious ancestry — poor and simpleminded people for whom he herds geese — causes Büttner to add a rhymed affirmation of the *ordo*:

> Wenn jeder thut was jm gebuert
> Der hat sein Wandel recht gefuert
> Wie vns der Genshirt Claus probiert
> Vnd jedem sein Stand nachgehn lehrt. (*Historien*, p. 48)
>
> [Each man who does what is his due rightly leads his life, as the goose-shepherd Claus exemplifies for us and teaches each man to stick to his rank.]

The rhymed form, which sometimes turns out imperfectly, serves the attempt to clad the added lesson, namely that everybody has to act according to his rank, in the characteristic style of an aphorism. This roots it even more firmly in the recipient's memory. But the fundamental nature of Büttner's didactics is brought out even more clearly by the moral belonging to Claus's geese-*Schwank*: what starts off as the initial biographical *Schwank* of a fool's biography and evokes amusing

[36] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, p. 284.

associations and hearty laughter among the narrative characters is reinterpreted by Büttner's lesson as a deadly serious warning against haughtiness, fashion, transitoriness, and voluptuousness. The lesson interprets the goose-fool as a clothes-fool who is immoderate regarding both fashion and the flesh. Thus, the general interpretative tendency of Büttner's epimythia becomes clear: narration and interpretation are completely aimed at a social disciplination of the bourgeois Protestant kind which is to affect all areas of life. Werner Röcke saw Büttner's *Schwank*-book as the last representative of a dying species:

> Die Gattungsgeschichte des Schwankromans endet mit den Werken zweier ebenso entschiedener wie kompromißloser Parteigänger Luthers und Repräsentanten lutherischer Orthodoxie, die ihr literarisches Schaffen der Durchsetzung und Festigung des wahren evangelischen Glaubens, der Integration der Kirche in die Landesherrschaft und der moralischen Reglementierung aller Lebensbereiche, d.h. einer 'Verchristlichung des alltäglichen Lebens' verschrieben haben, wie sie mit der Konfessionalisierung des kirchlichen Lebens im frühmodernen Staat und der engen Verbindung von Kirchenzucht, Kirchenlehre und staatlicher Gewalt einhergeht.[37]
>
> [The history of the *Schwank* genre ends with the works of two as different as uncompromising party followers of Luther and representatives of Lutheran orthodoxy who devoted their literary activity to an implementation and stabilization of the true Protestant faith, the integration of the church into the governance of the country and the moral regimentation of all areas of life, that is, to a 'Christianization of everyday life' as it accompanies the growing split between the faiths in the early modern state and the close connection of church discipline, church doctrine, and governmental power.]

The predominance of didactics as compared to amusing narrative content clearly differentiates Büttner's *Schwank*-book from Bote's *Ulenspiegel* and shows its affinity to morally satirical works such as Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*.[38] According to Röcke, the ideological instrumentalization of genre and fool figure turns Büttner's collection of *Schwänke* into 'geistliche Gebrauchsdichtung' (fiction written for spiritual purposes) which no longer subversively undermines social and religious norms as their predecessors did but makes their propagation 'zum wichtigsten Zweck ihrer Historien' (the most important purpose of their histories).[39]

[37] Werner Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen: Studien zu einer Poetik des deutschen Schwankromans im Spätmittelalter*, Forschungen zur Geschichte der älteren deutschen Literatur, 6 (Munich: Fink, 1987), p. 252.

[38] Hence, Büttner's moral 'Wer ist der heut die Genss ersteckt' (Who suffocates the geese today) can indeed be compared to the didactic intention of Brant's 'Von nuwen stunden', IV (On new hours) in which vanity, haughtiness, and pompous fashion are denounced.

[39] Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen*, pp. 252–53.

As editions of the Claus Narr histories which are known to him, Flögel mentions the prints of 1571,[40] 1572, 1573, 1579, 1587, 1602, and 1605.[41] In his characterization of the subject matter of the Claus Narr *Schwänke*, Flögel numbers Claus von Ranstädt among the wise fools who were characterized by 'klug ausgeprochene Weisheit'[42] (cleverly uttered wisdom). For Flögel, *Schwank* narration, anecdotal, and proverbial elements are all indissolubly connected with the historical character Claus Narr; no writing hand, no editorial interference, no influential power in the context of the historical tradition come between character/figure and narration. The equation of historical-biographical facts and the narrative plot of the *Schwänke* also serves to facilitate a certain aesthetic challenge: as Flögel points out, the fool's wisdom consists of 'einigen hundert sinnreichen, einfältigen und groben Sprüchen' (a few hundred useful, simpleminded and coarse sayings); and Flögel deliberately adds: 'worunter sich auch so manche Zötlein finden' (among which several dirty jokes can be found).[43] As the details of a fool's biography, these are not the moral or literary responsibility of the historian who merely reports them.

Flögel treats the print of 1602 in more detail because he has this 'Ausgabe [...] eben vor [... sich]'[44] (edition lying in front of him). In his account of some jocular prose tales 'zur Probe' (as samples), Flögel reveals the nature of both the printed edition of 1602 and himself as its exegete. Flögel singles out two *Schwänke*: one about a meek councillor who does not regard himself worthy to drink of the cup offered to him by the Elector, and another dealing with a maidservant who is overtaxed by the task of fetching water. Significantly longer morals are added to both of these fool's *Schwänke* which cover hardly more than five lines each: the prose stories about the events surrounding the fool are each followed by rhymed doctrines which analyse the narrative content with regard to its moral-didactic essence. Nevertheless, the fool only appears as a talking, acting, and sometimes interpreting character in the short jocular prose tales themselves. In the morals or epimythia, however, another voice, namely that of the collector and editor of the *Schwänke*, makes itself heard as a moral authority. These commentaries, which are

[40] Flögel might be mistaken in this: among the surviving prints and copies, Schmitz identifies the edition printed in Eisleben in 1572 as the first edition. Cf. Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 309. Equally Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 'Ueber Klaus Narr', p. 292.

[41] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, pp. 284–85.

[42] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, p. 284.

[43] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, p. 284.

[44] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, p. 285.

as distinct from the narrative as they make their didactic intentions known, are not mentioned by Flögel. Nevertheless, it at least becomes clear through the insight into the Claus Narr *Schwank*-book offered by Flögel that the right of existence of the tales is closely related to a socially disciplining ethos.

Flögel hints at the aesthetic right to exist of *Schwänke* featuring fools. He claims that these were 'den Liebhabern zum Trost oft im Druck erschienen'[45] (often published in print as a consolation for the aficionados): literary counselling and comforting stimulation will also play an important role in the rhetoric of the paratextual elements by Büttner, the collector and editor of the *Schwänke*, as a way of tying in with contemporary discourses on melancholy. Flögel cuts short his chapter on Claus Narr justifying this with the fact that his 'Histörchen' (little histories) were 'bekannt genug' (famous enough) since they were collected by numerous different authors.[46]

Büttner's Claus Narr

Paratextual Instrumentalization of Laughter, or: On the Usefulness of Fool-*Schwänke*

In the motto preceding Büttner's *Schwank*-book, the protagonist and the voice offering moral interpretations are still united. The narrator appears as Claus Narr and gives an advance summary of the *Schwank*-book:

> Hie ist kurtzweil / zucht / schimpff / vnd her
> In rechter mass / nach Buerger lehr / Zu gutem alles angefuert. (Büttner, *Historien*, motto)
>
> [Here is disport / discipline / jocularity / and honour
> To the right degree / according to the bourgeois doctrine / all collected here for good purposes.]

This speech by the narrator-character can be compared with the speech of the fool-character: by means of interjections or direct addresses to the audience ('sehet, liebe Leute'; have a look, gentle folks), the reception of early modern jocular prose texts is still reminiscent of conceptional (Peter Koch/Wulf Oesterreicher)[47] or even

[45] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, p. 284.

[46] Flögel, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, p. 287.

[47] On the terminology, cf. Dorothea Klein, *Mittelalter: Lehrbuch Germanistik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2006), pp. 13–16.

staged orality (*Mündlichkeit*). By this means, the reading text acquires its *Vokalität* (effectiveness in oral performance) and 'dramatization' which while reading or reciting the *Schwank* repertoire causes an immediate interaction between the speaker of the fool's role and the listening audience.

Entertaining content (*kurtzweil*, *schimpff*) (disport, jocularity) and its moral benefit (*zucht*, *her*) (discipline, honour) are also programmatically linked to each other and express a shared intention: moderation, as a traditional basic virtue, for the bourgeois reader. Additionally, the foolish narrator-ego chastises unteachable recipients:

> Wers lisst / mich recht vernehmen wird / Ders nicht versteht / vnd wil auch sein / Zu klug / der bleibe klug allein. (Büttner, *Historien*, motto)
>
> [Who reads this / will understand me in the right way / Whoever does not understand it / and wants to be / too clever / may remain only clever.]

But finally, it is revealed that the fool's mask is here also a narrator-persona after all:

> Zwar ich schreib guts / kein args ich schreib / Vnd jedermann verhast doch bleib / das macht der Gleissner und sein hertz / Der achtet Gott / vnd mich zum Schertz. (Büttner, *Historien*, motto)
>
> [Although I write good things / and do not write any bad thing / I am still hateful to everybody / that is done by the hypocrite and his heart / who respects God / and me only as a joke.]

And, indeed, the tone of the motto as well as the type of rhymes used and the morally interpretative orientation are similar in style to the epimythia which Büttner adds to every single *Schwank* and proverb of his narrative collection.

The following preamble is addressed by Büttner to an honour-, peace-, and virtue-loving (German) reader who is first told the sovereigns that Claus Narr served. As the immediate reason for his narration, Büttner states his aim to write down every word and every *Schwank* of this jester in order to induce joy and laughter at the electoral courts (cf. Büttner, *Historien*, preamble, p. 8).

The characteristics of fools first mentioned are simplemindedness, 'einfeltige[r] Mensch' (a simpleminded person), and amiability, 'den guten Menschen lieb gehabt / vnd tewer geachtet' (loved by good people / and highly valued) (Büttner, *Historien*, preamble, p. 3). The author then alleges that he took over the narrative content from people of high rank who had themselves known Claus Narr in person and simply wrote it down following their example ('nachgeschrieben'). As an interpretation of his protagonist, Büttner offers a seemingly reliable etymology of the term 'fool'. He states that Claus was not

> allein von Natur / in seinen sinnlichen krefften / der vernunfft / vnd verstandes / ein zerruetteter / schlechter / einfeltiger / kindischer NAAR gewesen, daraus vns das deutsche wort Narr / das ist / infans, ein Kind / oder Kneblein / gemeine worden / und in vnser Sprache kommen. (Büttner, *Historien*, preamble, pp. 7–8.)
>
> [only by nature / regarding his sensual powers / his rationality / and reason / a disordered / ordinary / simpleminded / childish 'NAAR' / through whom the German word 'Narr' / which means / *infans*, child / or little boy / became familiar to us / and was taken over into our language.]

Rather — the adorable aspect of *simplicitas* is hinted at in this context — his actions and speech were 'seiner einfalt vnd kindischen thorheit / vrsach entprungen' (Büttner, *Historien*, preamble, pp. 7–8; caused / by his simplemindedness and childish foolishness). The narrator claims the same characteristics for himself as author: 'allein auf mein gewissen / ehre / trew / vnd wahren glauben / wie ein einfeltiger Christen Mann' (Büttner, *Historien*, preamble, p. 10; only on my conscience / honour / constancy / and true faith / as a simpleminded Christian).

Büttner argues that Claus Narr is absolutely not comparable to other jesters because he 'seine angeborne Stoliditet / oder thorheit / so schimpflich beweist vnd getrieben' (Büttner, *Historien*, preamble, p. 5; proved and acted out his inherent stolidity / or foolishness / in a particularly entertaining way) at the Saxon court and that therefore his actions and words should be written down, preserved, and fruitfully read. Here are already the first indications of the tension between a plot with a fool as protagonist and the catalogue of norms and values which is to be conveyed. The content which at first sight is simply risible and foolish has to rely on an interpretation which removes ambiguity and reduces contingency, for education. The didactic intention is carried out as ideological hermeneutics which is meant to beat conformity into the reader's head with the aid of the rhymed form. The narrator of the preamble claims to have carried out comprehensive investigations and not even to have flinched from interspersing '(mit eingemenget) gar selten ein frembd poesslein' (a foreign farce at times) for the sake of 'manchfeltiger Christlicher vnd Buergerlicher Lere' (diverse Christian and bourgeois doctrines) (Büttner, *Historien*, preamble, p. 6). This once again shows the shadows of topical assertions of truth: even the authenticity of the plot is vigorously subordinated to the instructive purpose. Büttner compares his work with texts of the same or a similar genre, such as 'die unzuochtigen Eulenspiegelen lepperey / vnd andere Schandgedichte' (the lecherous foolery of Eulenspiegel / and other disgraceful poems), which were 'schnoede leserey vnd Suendenbuocher' (disdainful reading and books full of sins) (Büttner, *Historien*, p. 12) since they summoned the Devil and strived for sodomy. On the contrary, proverbs and *Schwänke* about Claus Narr banished sodomy and curbed 'Zechen vnd Zutrinken' (carousing and excessive

drinking) (Büttner, *Historien*, p. 13) and were thus a reason for genuine joy and laughter. Büttner emphasizes the 'kurtzweilige [...] schimpfferei / an diesen saubern / vnd reinen Clausen worten / vnd wie alles Christlich und Buergerlich zu gebrauchen' (entertaining jocularity / offered by these clean / and pure words by Claus / and the way in which it can all be used for Christian and bourgeois purposes) which he himself had 'nach der Aetica vnd Tugendlehre gesetzet' (arranged in accordance with ethics and doctrines of virtue) (Büttner, *Historien*, p. 11).

In the context of the self-attributed aesthetic of effect, Büttner also ties in with contemporary discourses on melancholy: the tasks of literature were to induce joy and laughter and to cheer up a dejected mind which struggled against 'anfechtende traurigkeit' (worrisome despair). In the sixteenth century, an antimelancholic effect was attributed to the fool's risible gestures and deformed body.[48] This curative aesthetic of effect was based on the doctrine of temperaments and humours which had been well established since antiquity. In the case of melancholic temperaments, the composition of the humours is dominated by black bile. The melancholic was considered to exhibit symptoms both outwardly in his appearance and inwardly in his constitution: a grey complexion, thin hair, and dry skin, weariness, timidity, and sadness.[49] The notion that human temperaments have physiological causes (among others) correlates with the idea that the composition of the humours and the temperament as well as physiology and emotionality can be positively manipulated by means of positive emotions. The claim to a curative effect of reading is correspondingly common in *Schwank* and fool literature.[50] Büttner, too, asserts that he is able to 'schwermuetige trawrigkeit [...] wenden' (*Historien*, preamble, p. 16; alter lugubrious sadness). Curing through jocularity was considered a remedy not only for dejection but also for choler.[51]

[48] Cf. Schmitz, 'Claus Narr und seine Zunft', p. 392.

[49] Cf. Heinz-Günter Schmitz, 'Das Melancholieproblem in Wissenschaft und Kunst in der frühen Neuzeit', *Sudhoffs Archiv, Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, 60 (1976), 135–62 (p. 136).

[50] 'Nun allein umb ein frölich Gemüt zu machen in schweren Zeiten, und die Lesenden und Zuhörenden mögen gute kurtzweilige Froiden und Schwänck daruß fabulleren' (Only in order to create a cheerful mind in hard times, and the reading and listening audience may invent good entertaining pleasures and *Schwänke* on the basis of this). *Ein kurtzweiliges Lesen von Dil Ulenspiegel*, based on the print edition of 1515, ed. by Wolfgang Lindow, RUB, 1887 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), p. 7.

[51] Schmitz hints at the fact that in the *Zimmerische Chronik* a doleful count is given the following piece of advice: 'und als im durch sein medicum, doctor Georg Hannen, geraten, er solt sich zu allen frewden schicken, traurigkait, auch schweren muet sampt dem zorn fallen lassen und

(Social) Discipline through Literature: The Fool's Gestures and Emotionality

The examples of how the fool's gestures were instrumentalized by both supporters and opponents of the Reformation serve to illustrate two main intentions which also form the basis of the *Schwank*-collection featuring Claus Narr as protagonist: the fool is meant to disclose false doctrines and human misconduct and to assist in expelling them through the laughableness of his gestures. The reader, on the other hand, is to be purged and improved in an entertaining way. Brutal exorcism is superseded by the intentionality of the literary aesthetic of effect: Luther's reformatory doctrine is to be propagated and papacy to be demonized.

Büttner affirms that Claus Narr, in his capacity as jester, at the Saxon court strongly influenced his lords' emotionality because the fool's *Schwänke*, anecdotes, proverbs, and funny actions enabled him to induce 'an Chur und Fuerstlichen Heusern frewde [...] / vnd gelechter' (*Historien*, preamble, p. 8; joy and laughter at electoral and princely courts). Büttner, the *Schwank*-collector and priest, tries to transfer the fool's power to spread cheerfulness and thus to banish the rulers' melancholy to his *Schwank*-book: Almost as a 'jester for ordinary people', the *Schwank*-book is intended to baffle sodomy and to provoke the reader's 'frewde [...] / vnd gelechtere' (joy and laughter).

In accordance with reformatory concepts of morality, Büttner uses the preamble to his collection of *Schwänke* to decidedly distance himself from 'unzuochtigen Eulenspiegelen lepperey / vnd andere Schandgedichte / das ist / schnoede leserey vnd Suendenbuecher / die dem Teufel rufen / vnd Unzucht suchen' (the lecherous foolery of Eulenspiegel / and other disgraceful poems / which are / disdainful reading and books full of sins / which summon the Devil / and strive for sodomy). In this context, we come back to the boyhood history since it is suitable to be contrasted to the genre context and thus to exemplify the specific aesthetic of Büttner's *Schwank*-book regarding the fool's gestures among other aspects. Büttner argues that the *Schwänke* featuring Claus Narr are to be valued more highly since they make people immune to bawdiness, carousing, and drinking, and prompt joy and laughter. Claus Narr's boyhood *Schwank*, which proves him to be a natural

kurzweilig leut um sich haben, also muest der obgenannt alt pfaff [a notorious prankster and joker] vil umb in sein' (and as he was advised by his *medicum*, doctor Georg Hannen, that he should strive for all pleasures and dismiss sadness as well as the dejected mind, together with his wrath, and should surround himself with entertaining people, so the above-mentioned parson had to be with him very often): *Zimmerische Chronik*, 3, p. 341, quoted after Schmitz, 'Claus Narr und seine Zunft', p. 393.

fool, is already far more harmless and only characterized by cruelty and unscrupulousness towards animals. Only the father's readiness to dismiss his foolish son hints at the threat which a foolish child poses to its parents since it is not in any way useful to them and only causes trouble in its parents' house. In contrast to this, the threat which the fool poses to the community of the village is narratively developed in the second boyhood history of Herman Bote's *Schwank*-novel *Ein kurtzweilig Lesen von Dil Ulenspiegel* (1515) which recounts how the young Ulenspiegel, sitting behind his father on a horse, 'ließ die Lüt je in den Arß sehen'[52] (lets people see his arse from behind). When passers-by start insulting him as 'Schalck' (rogue), his father places him on the horse in front of him. But in this position, Ulenspiegel opens wide 'das Mul uff und zannet die bauren an und reckt die Zungen uß'[53] (his mouth and shows his teeth to the peasants and sticks out his tongue). As a consequence of these events, Ulenspiegel and his parents have to leave the village. *Blecken*, the uncovering of the bottom, and *Zannen*, the showing of the teeth, have been emphasized by Katrin Kröll as conventional gestures of mockery due to their striking prevalence in literature and Christian pictorial art. Thus, the baring of the bum can also be found in texts such as Philip Frankfurter's *Die geschicht des pfarrers von Kalenberg* (around 1473), in the dialogue *Frag und Antwort Salomonis und Markolfi* (1483), or in *Leben des Äsops* (1501) by Sebastian Brant. The baring of the teeth — sometimes accompanied by the sticking out of the tongue — also belongs to the stock repertoire of foolish gestures and occurs in Konrad von Würzburg's narrative *Von dem Ritter mit der halben Birn* (oldest manuscript around 1330/50),[54] in *Reinhart Fuchs*, and in texts by Rabelais.[55] Both gestures, the baring of teeth and the uncovering of the bottom, are fools' gestures with synonymous meanings which as coarse obscenities provokingly infringe the medieval codex of moral gestures.[56] In addition to the satirical intention, these baring gestures are also attributed an apotropaic effect. The purpose to avert

[52] *Ein kurtzweilig Lesen*, p. 13.

[53] *Ein kurtzweilig Lesen*, p. 13.

[54] 'als ein tumber snürrinc | zart er ûf sînen giel' (lines 268–69; like a silly fool | he opened his mouth wide): Konrad von Würzburg [?], 'Von dem Ritter mit der halben Birn', in *Novellistik des Mittelalters: Märendichtung*, ed. and trans. by Klaus Grubmüller, Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 23 (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1996), pp. 178–207 (p. 192).

[55] Cf. Katrin Kröll, 'Der schalkhaft beredsame Leib als Medium verborgener Wahrheit: Zur Bedeutung von Entblößungsgebärden in mittelalterlicher Bildkunst, Literatur und darstellendem Spiel', in *Mein ganzer Körper ist Gesicht*, ed. by Kröll and Steger, pp. 234–94 (pp. 240–41).

[56] Kröll, 'Der schalkhaft beredsame Leib', p. 241.

calamity aligns with the denunciation of common human and ecclesiastical shortcomings. That Büttner in the design of his fool figure widely renounces scatological humour as it abounds in *Ulenspiegel* entirely accords with Luther who in the preamble to his fables strongly advises to 'leutern vnd zu fegen' (purge and sweep) the traditional narratives.[57]

Since his *Schwank*-book is also designed as a collection of examples for preaching purposes, Büttner accordingly lets the fool Claus also appear in a state of paranoid fear. His anxious imagination is another factor which shows the protagonist to be a natural fool. Hence, the jocular prose tale *7. Der Todt im Kruge* tells how Claus Narr after drinking too much wine believes that Death was in the jug which he has 'geitzig' (avariciously) emptied and that drinking he has swallowed him and will now, in punishment for this, be eternally haunted, drowned, or strangled by him. Similarly paranoid is Claus's fear that after having lost his hat he will also have to lose his head (*17. Claus locket seinem Hute*). Büttner instrumentalizes these paranoid fears for the sake of a Christian as well as bourgeois social discipline which is to reach all areas of life, including for instance moderation in eating and drinking.

In the *Schwänke* featuring Claus Narr, emotionality is mainly addressed in religious contexts and thus evoked on the part of the reader. In doing so, the priest Wolfgang Büttner did not shrink from using his protagonist as the mouthpiece of anti-Jewish agitation. Thus, Büttner tells in the thirteenth *Schwank* entitled *Christi Moerder gerichtet* how Claus Narr is informed by a monk that the Jews had 'gemartert / gecreutziget / vnd getoedtet' (tortured / crucified / and killed) Christ. The emotional reaction of Claus Narr the fool is anger about the 'Mordthat' (murder) which, on his recommendation, should be harshly avenged. The lesson added to this jocular narrative develops an image of God matching the emotional topic of the *Schwank* which again instrumentalizes fear: this time it is fear of the vengeful God whose wrath and punishment likewise never fail. By means of the Christian belief in the resurrection, the following *Schwank* centres another emotional reaction of the fool: when Claus Narr is first told about the resurrection of Christ, his childish reaction is full of compassionate joy. But his 'foolish' joy is again related to anger and dolefulness about the 'murderers' of Christ. Nevertheless, contemptuous treatment is mainly aimed at Catholic doctrine and papacy which is denounced with polemical torrents of hatred as the spawn of immorality and false doctrines.[58] In contrast to this, Protestant doctrine is presented as the basis and outpour of

[57] The quotation follows Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 40.

[58] Cf. Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen*, pp. 258–59.

positive emotionality: Luther's doctrine is said to offer courage, undaunted enthusiasm, and strength.[59]

Discipline through 'Interpretation' and Teaching

Wolfgang Büttner, the collector and editor of Claus Narr's *Schwänke* and proverbs, was called a 'kompromißloser Parteigänger Luthers und Repräsentant [...] lutherischer Orthodoxie'[60] (uncompromising party follower of Luther and representative of Lutheran orthodoxy) by Werner Röcke. The rhymed lessons which Büttner adds to the narratives in particular propagate a 'Katechismus bürgerlich-protestantischer Moral und Selbstbescheidung'[61] (catechism of bourgeois Protestant morality and humbleness) which campaigns against vices such as gluttony, extravagance, and pompous clothing as well as loquacity, flagrance, sodomy, and voluptuousness. In addition to this, papacy is demonized and Luther idolized.

The didactic intentions of the *Schwank*-book also address the gestures of obscenity and of the *Vitalsphäre* (sphere of bodily functions) as well as negative emotions in order to eradicate them in the real life of the reader who is improved and protected against melancholy by making them contemptible and ridiculous in the fictitious sphere of the *Schwank* narration. That Büttner's epimythia sometimes exceed the *Schwank* narratives in quantity and credit them with exaggerated profoundness and ethical meaning is also owed to that early bourgeois Protestant ethics which 'von jeder menschlichen Tätigkeit den Nachweis ihres Nutzens verlangte'[62] (demanded a proof of usefulness for each human action). Thus, the balance of Horace's old poetological postulation 'docere et delectare' (teach and entertain), which was frequently paraphrased during the Middle Ages and early modern age and was particularly often quoted by authors of jocular prose tales,[63] is lastingly disturbed: the seeming usefulness of the lesson stifles the laughter about the punchline of the *Schwank* when everything is charged with instructional references and ethical meaning.

[59] Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen*, p. 259.

[60] Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen*, p. 252.

[61] Röcke, *Die Freude am Bösen*, p. 256.

[62] Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 35.

[63] Cf. Schmitz, *Wolfgang Büttners Volksbuch*, p. 35.

Playing the Fool: Eccentric Behaviour and Political Acumen in Wace's *Roman de Rou*

Françoise Le Saux

Wace's *Roman de Rou*, undertaken in 1160 at the behest, probably, of Henry II,[1] is a somewhat unusual piece of dynastic propaganda. A history of the House of Normandy from its Viking founders to King Henry I of England, the *Rou* presents an unsettling — and sometimes deeply unattractive — picture of the relatives and forebears of Wace's illustrious patron, to the extent, indeed, that it has been suggested that the poet ended up incurring the displeasure of the King, who eventually entrusted the project to another writer, Benoît de Sainte-Maure.[2] While there is no doubt that Wace approached his task with a degree of intellectual integrity that made him include facts a less scrupulous courtier would have ignored,[3] the prominence granted in his narrative to anecdotes of undignified, eccentric, or frankly irrational behaviour suggests that this is an aspect of his subject that he considered to be of real importance. The *Roman de Rou* anecdotes, of course, have a high entertainment value and contribute towards a more memorable depiction of each of the successive dukes. Some are quite flattering: for example Duke Richard I's adventures in the valleys and woodlands

[1] This is not certain, as there is no clear statement to that effect by Wace; however, the evidence points in that direction. See *The History of the Norman People: Wace's Roman de Rou*, trans. by Glyn S. Burgess (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), p. xi. Unless specified, all translations of the *Roman de Rou* are from Burgess; all quotations and references to the original text are from *Le Roman de Rou de Wace*, ed. by A. J. Holden, 3 vols (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1938–40).

[2] See J.-G. Gouttebroze, 'Pourquoi congédier un historiographe: Henry II Plantagenêt et Wace (1155–1174)', *Romania*, 112 (1991), 289–311.

[3] On Wace's method, see Françoise Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2005); also *The History of the Norman People*, trans. by Burgess, pp. xi–xiii.

of Normandy endow him with the glamour of an Arthurian hero, while his habit of roaming the countryside at night, quashing any demonic or ghostly activity he finds on his way, constitutes a nod towards the religious motifs of chivalric romance.[4] However, many of Wace's amusing vignettes have an undercurrent of threat, and the eccentric behaviour of the holder of power is shown on several occasions to be an expression of manipulativeness, ensuring authority through fear when it is not a straightforward ruse designed to promote a specific aim. In this respect, the ability to carry off apparently foolish behaviour is shown to be a key attribute of the successful leader of men.

The first instance in the *Roman de Rou* of 'playing the fool' is also the most extreme and most elaborate example of such behaviour in the work. Expelled from their Scandinavian homeland due to an evil custom meant to solve a problem of endemic overpopulation, the Viking Hasting and his companions decide to conquer Rome. However, they have never seen a real city, with the result that when they come across the town of Luni, on the Italian coast, they are so impressed that they assume that this must be Rome. As the town is well fortified, it is clear that they will have to resort to ruse, so Hasting feigns a deathbed conversion. To convince the Count and Bishop of Luni that he is seriously ill, Hasting indulges in some extravagant playacting that is described with great relish by Wace:

> Li cuvert malade se faint,
> sa chiere et son viaire taint,
> mout plaint le cors, moult plaint le chief,
> dist que par tout li estoit grief;
> sovent iert palle, sovent ert pers,
> sovent asdenz, sovent envers
> sovent s'endort, sovent s'ezveille,
> sovent s'estent, sovent ventraille;
> Dex, que donc nel prist paision!
> Si remainsist la traïson.
> Les bras estent, les poinz detort,
> cescun quil voit dist quil soit mort;

[4] This is in addition to anecdotes aligning Richard with the hero of the *chanson de geste* genre; see Le Saux, *Companion to Wace*, pp. 178–81. Moreover, the anecdote of the lecherous sacristan of St Ouen (*Rou*, 3ᵉ Partie, lines 337–510), where the Duke is called upon to settle a dispute between angels and devils, is hagiographical rather than chivalric in nature — perhaps to counteract Richard's spooky reputation of having night-vision. The wider implications of this particular anecdote are analysed by Philip E. Bennett, 'The Reign of Duke Richard I in the *Roman de Rou*', in *Maistre Wace: A Celebration*, ed. by Glyn S. Burgess and Judith Weiss (St Helier: Société Jersiaise, 2006), pp. 41–54.

qui oïst le felon crier
et le veïst escaucherrer,
denz reguinier, braz degeter,
jambes estendre et recorber,
sovent sangloter et baallier,
le nes fronchir, ex rouïller,
qui donc veïst, comment cuidast
que li traïtres respassast?
Cil meïsmes quil congnoissoient
et qui la traïsson savoient
et sez plains et sez criz ooient
et sa contenance veoient,
cremoient que l'ame s'en alast
et que jamés n'en relevast,
et que paission l'eüst pris
qui en tantes guises s'est mis. (*Rou*, 1[e] Partie, lines 573–600)

[The scoundrel was feigning illness; he had stained his face and countenance and was complaining bitterly about pains in his body and his head, saying that he was hurting all over. His skin was constantly pale and livid, he was constantly lying face down or on his back, constantly falling asleep and waking up, constantly stretching and rolling on his stomach. God, if only his death agony had really taken him! In that way the trickery would have ceased. He stretched out his arms and wrung his hands; everyone who saw him thought he was on the point of death. How would anyone who heard the wretch yelling and saw his antics, how he ground his teeth and waved his arms, stretched and bent his legs, constantly sobbing and yawning, wrinkling his nose and rolling his eyes, how would anyone who had seen him have thought the scoundrel would recover? Even those who knew him and were aware of the deception, hearing his moans and cries and seeing his behaviour, feared his soul was departing, that he would never get up again and that his death agony, which was showing itself in so many ways, had taken him.]

This description is inescapably comical and brings to mind the deathbed scene in the thirteenth-century *Farce de Maistre Pathelin*, where the trickster hero puts on a comparable performance for the benefit of the draper he has just swindled.[5] It is noteworthy that, read aloud, Wace's passage forces the reader to mimic the (anti-)hero's antics: 'denz reguinier' (line 587), for example, with suitable elocution, echoes the gnashing teeth and curling up of the lips of the supposed moribund, while 'nes fronchir' (line 590) will inevitably make the reader's nose twitch. In a work that, like most if not all vernacular texts of the period, was meant to be

[5] See 'Maistre Pierre Pathelin', in *Jeux et Sapience du Moyen Âge*, ed. by Albert Pauphilet, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Moyen-Âge, 3 (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1951), pp. 279–439 (especially pp. 307–22).

read in public, this is an open invitation to the *lector* to introduce voice effects and gestures that could only have enhanced the comedy of the passage. However, this is black humour. Hasting's aim is not just to deprive his victim of his property, as is the case in the *Pathelin* play; he is after Christian lives as well as booty. Moreover, as the narrator is careful to stress, this is treachery of the worse sort: Hasting is a 'cuvert' (line 573), a 'felon' (line 585), 'traïtres' (line 592), intent on 'traïson' (line 582). He commits sacrilege, making use of the sacrament of baptism to murder his godfather, the bishop, and the God-fearing people of Luni, without the slightest compunction, like a wild beast — a comparison explicitly made by the narrator, who describes the massacre as 'comme li leu fet de brebis | quant il peut entrer en teit' (lines 706–07; 'just as a wolf slaughters sheep when it manages to get into a fold'). The Viking's antics are just one facet of his ability to be an outstanding leader, with clear goals and a matching determination to achieve them; they also give a sense of the strength of his desire for power and success.

The exact relationship of the 'Première Partie' of the *Roman de Rou* to the rest of the work has been queried and is therefore printed in editions of the work in an appendix rather than as one of the introductory sections to the poem. This is unfortunate, because, apart from the fact that the Hasting episode is also present in the Latin histories of the dukes of Normandy used by Wace as his sources, it constitutes a yardstick against which the reader can judge a second, more successful wave of Vikings: the founders of Normandy, under the leadership of Rou. It is not strictly speaking part of the history of the direct ancestors of Henry II — hence, perhaps, the different metre in which it was composed — but the episode is essential to our understanding of who the early Normans were, particularly since Hasting may be viewed as their precursor in eventually settling in France and obtaining domains from the French king.[6] The Norman dukes are consistently depicted as genuinely pious, and therefore are not tainted with Hasting's blasphemous paganism; but they are equally prepared to ignore propriety if necessary, to the extent of seeming comical. This is especially the case of three dukes: Richard II, Robert I the Magnificent, and William, the future Conqueror.

At a first glance, Richard II is a remarkably down-to-earth character. Having survived in his childhood the upheaval of peasant revolts and civil unrest, he is shown following what amounts to a policy of close control over his barons,

[6] Though he will lose his nerve and run away from France in fear after the arrival of Rou and his men sour his relations with the King of France (*Rou*, 2e Partie, lines 524–42). Rou, who is not guilty of Hasting's sacrilegious behaviour, can therefore be seen to be deservedly more successful than his compatriot.

securing their loyalties by reserving the offices at his court to men of noble birth, something Wace notes with great approval:

> Gentil furent li chapelein,
> Gentil furent li escrivain,
> Gentil furent li cunestable
> E bien puissant e bien aidable;
> Gentil furent li senescal,
> Gentil furent li marescal,
> Gentil furent li butteillier,
> Gentil furent li despensier;
> Li chamberlenc e li ussier
> Furent tuit noble chevalier. (*Rou*, 3ᵉ Partie, lines 799–808)

[The chaplains were noble, the scribes were noble and the constables noble, very powerful and able-bodied. The stewards were noble, the marshals noble, the butlers noble and the almoners noble; the chamberlains and the ushers were all noble knights.]

These people, we are told, were given their 'livreison' on a daily basis, as well as gifts and clothes at great feasts (lines 809–10), and all vied with the others in courtesy, noble and honourable behaviour, and generosity (lines 811–14). However, this idealized picture is given the lie by two anecdotes that are in appearance flattering, but that hint at a culture of fear carefully managed by the Duke. The first (*Rou*, 3ᵉ Partie, lines 1863–1974) relates the theft of a spoon by one of the Duke's knights. The spoon was pawned and the knight used the money to invite his companions to supper; but the Duke's chamberlain had noticed what had happened and, on the Duke's orders, retrieved the spoon by redeeming the knight's pledges. When the knight realizes that his larceny has been discovered, he is mortified and leaves the court, whereupon the Duke, ignoring all propriety, rushes after him on horseback and brings him back. He then publicly gives him enough money to support himself without resorting to theft. Moreover, Richard keeps the incident quiet and never reproaches his knight this act of folly ('cele folie', line 1973). Thereafter, says the narrator, 'mult out entrels dous grant amur' (line 1972; 'there was great love between the two of them').

The implications are that the Duke is a man of great generosity of spirit, full of loving forbearance for a member of his retinue who has acted out of character; yet considering the harshness with which theft is viewed elsewhere in the *Roman de Rou*, Richard's behaviour is inconsistent and smacks of weakness. Moreover, why should the incident have made Richard and his knight especially close? It would seem that Richard was unwilling or could not afford to alienate the thief by shaming or punishing him. The knight does not appear to have held a prominent position at court, yet he seems to be a person of substance. His lodgings are big

enough to entertain a crowd, he has a little household of his own (he has more than one squire), and he seems to be a popular man with many friends. He steals the spoon in order to fund a lavish lifestyle: this is clearly a man who perceives himself as being entitled to a certain standard of living and needs money to maintain his rank. One possible interpretation of this anecdote is that this knight was influential enough among the Norman courtiers — and therefore, if Wace's comment about the social origins of all of Richard's retainers is to be believed, among the Norman barons as a whole — for it to be dangerous for Richard to allow him to leave. The humour implicit in a duke demeaning himself by pursuing a thief in order to plead with him to return to court fails to make the reader laugh, because Wace subtly hints at a tense and potentially dangerous political context; in order to maintain his authority, the ruler must know when to relax his principles and his personal dignity. Therefore, instead of being chastised, the knight is bribed back and given public tokens of ducal favour, thereby ingratiating the faction he represented. His personal loyalty is secured by a form of blackmail, as the Duke now has the means to destroy his reputation, even though he does not actually do so. There is no folly in Richard's apparently whimsical generosity, and we are far from the world of farce.

These dark undertones to what purports to be an entirely positive story are in no way fortuitous. Wace as a writer is eminently aware of narrative undercurrents in his material and does not hesitate to reshape it when he sees fit. This may be seen from Wace's treatment of the second anecdote in the *Roman de Rou* relative to Richard II, recounting how Bernard the Philosopher came to join the Norman court. This story has also come down to us in the *Gesta Normannorum ducum*; it is one of the interpolations by an anonymous redactor from the abbey of St Etienne at Caen, and featured in Wace's copy of the work. We can therefore compare Wace's version with that of his source. In the Latin, we are told that Bernard was an eminent scholar, in charge of the schools in Etruria. Having heard of the virtue of Duke Richard, he wished to see for himself if his reputation was deserved; he goes to Rouen, finds lodgings there, and seeks to meet the Duke. But that, he is told, is impossible:

> Est de quo requiris dux ille consistens in huius urbis turre, quarumdam rerum publicarum tocius Neustriae habens, tertia dies est hodie, generale placitum neque aliquis nostrum audet ad eum uenire, nisi prius a cubiculariis et ab hostiariis sit uocatus. Sed si uis eum uidere, post prandium poteris eum prospicere in eminentiori fenestra turris, ubi solitus est huius urbis menia et prata necnon flumina perspicere.
>
> [The duke is at present in the castle tower engaged in public affairs concerning the whole of Neustria. Today is the third day of the general court, but not one of us dare pay a visit to the duke unless he has been summoned by the chamberlains or the doorkeepers. But if you wish to see him, you can watch him at the usual time just after supper, at the upper

> window of the tower, where he has been in the habit of observing the city walls, the fields and the rivers.][7]

Bernard then disguises himself as a pauper, makes his way to the castle with a bow and arrow, and very noticeably and frenziedly ('velut amens', 'like a madman') pretends to try to be aiming at the Duke. The Duke notices him, hides away, and orders the man to be brought to him for questioning, rather than submitting him to immediate torture and death, as advised by his retainers. Bernard thus explains his behaviour in the following way:

> Quia solus et more bestiarum uiuis, neque aliquis sine iussu presumit te adire, te arcu et sagitta sicut siluestrem bestiam putaui appetere.
>
> [Because you live alone as if you were a wild animal and no one dares to see you without an order to do so, I thought I should approach you with a bow and arrow as if you really were a wild beast.] (*Gesta Normannorum cucum*, pp. 30–31)

On discovering Bernard's identity, the Duke embraces him and keeps him at his court as his trusted adviser, where he remains until his death.

There is much in this anecdote that is puzzling. The statement that the Duke was inaccessible during the 'placitum generale', as pointed out by Elisabeth van Houts in her note to this passage, is not corroborated by any other medieval source.[8] The *bon mot* of Bernard suggests a far more protracted period of inaccessibility than just a few days in the year and hints at a very real culture of fear at the Norman court, with the Duke having turned into something of a recluse. Moreover, the immediate assumption on the part of the ducal entourage that this suspicious character might be 'Francorum aliquis insidiator [...] aut maleficus' ('a French conspirator or a criminal', *Gesta Normannorum ducum*, pp. 30–31) does not tally with what is known of Franco-Norman relations at the time; historically, the relations between the Duke of Normandy and the King of France were quite cordial under Richard II.[9] If the enemy was not an external one, then the potential threat must have been internal. The fact that Richard took Bernard, a foreigner, as his closest adviser also smacks of distrust on his part of his Norman barons; and it may be significant that Bernard's final words to the Duke, just before his death,

[7] Text and translation quoted from *The Gesta Normannorum ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, ed. and trans. by Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992–95), II (1995), 30–31.

[8] See *Gesta Normannorum ducum*, trans. and ed. by van Houts, II, 30, n. 2; also David Bates, *Normandy before 1066* (London: Longman, 1982), especially pp. 151–62.

[9] See Bates, *Normandy before 1066*, pp. 66–67.

alert him to a heresy 'inter Luxouienses clericos', literally 'among the clergy of Lisieux' (*Gesta Normannorum ducum*, pp. 32–33), but understood by van Houts as referring to a heretical movement instigated by one 'Lisious', which took place in 1022–23 and involved the Duke's own uncle.[10] This 'heresy' was therefore potentially destabilizing politically as well as religiously.

As it stands, the Latin anecdote is more about Bernard, who dies in odour of sanctity and whose grave is credited with miraculous cures, than about the Duke himself. Bernard is the wise man who obtains what he wants through his wit; the comedy is both verbal and situational, with ostentatious playacting, implicit slapstick, and an apparently ludicrous (but revealing) comparison of the Duke to a hunted animal. Bernard pretends to be mad, but he also teaches the Duke a lesson in a humorous and entertaining way. Wace's account of this anecdote is markedly different in focus to its source. The end of the tale is compressed, and the mention of both the heresy and the miraculous cures at Bernard's grave are omitted. The beginning is also reshaped. The 'burgeis' at whose house the philosopher is lodging explains at greater length what is entailed by the Duke's general court, and therefore makes the unavailability of the Duke appear to be due simply to his workload going through the accounts and reports of his 'provoz', 'baillis', 'gravereins', and 'vescuntes' (*Rou*, 3^{e} Partie, lines 2006–07): audience by appointment only, therefore, during what is a busy time. The Duke is not so much inaccessible as temporarily engaged in pressing official business. Richard's habit of leaning at the tower window is not described as a predictably regular feature of his day, but merely something he does 'quant li ennoie' (line 2009; 'when he is weary'), thus suggesting a more varied lifestyle. Bernard's suspicious behaviour, when he is spotted, is not attributed to his belonging to a possible conspiracy against the Duke; he is simply thought to be a 'paltenier', a scoundrel (line 2057). It does not seem to occur to the Duke (or his men) that this man might not be acting alone, or on his own behalf. Richard's retainers wish to kill him, as in the Latin, and the Duke forbids it, explicitly stating that the man must not be mistreated. Wace lightens the tone of the episode through the addition of a burlesque vignette where the philosopher is beaten and threatened by the Duke's 'servanz' (lines 2061–76), in a scene not unlike that in the Oxford *Folie Tristan*, where the hero is pelted with stones and hit by bystanders.[11] This could reflect a regular practice of rough handling of

[10] See *Gesta Normannorum ducum*, trans. and ed. by van Houts, II, 32, n. 1.

[11] See the *Folie Tristan d'Oxford* (especially lines 248–58), in *Tristan et Iseut: Les poèmes français. La saga norroise*, ed. and trans. by Daniel Lacroix and Philippe Walter, Lettres gothiques, 4521 (Paris: Livre de poche, 1989), pp. 233–81.

troublesome beggars and madmen;[12] it would also have been perceived by a twelfth-century audience as quite funny.[13]

However, the most significant change made by Wace to his source is the omission of the witticism by which Bernard explained his strange behaviour, replacing it by a somewhat fawning statement by the philosopher that it was a ploy to get to see the Duke and that he preferred to be beaten up than not to have got his audience with Richard (lines 2083–94). The disappearance of the comparison of the Duke to a hunted animal cowering under cover shows that Wace was aware of the detrimental impact on the image of Richard it entailed. He is also careful to depict the relationship between Bernard and Richard as slightly less politically charged than in the Latin, translating 'ad libitum atque arbitrium eius iura sui ducaminis disponens' ('[ruling] his duchy according to Bernard's wishes and judgement', *Gesta Normannorum ducum*, pp. 30–31) with the more measured 'mult fist ceo que il conseilla' (*Rou*, 3[e] Partie, line 2100; 'he did much of what he advised' or 'he acted very much on his advice'). As a result, the anecdote becomes a rather trite celebration of the Duke's fame, piety, and forbearance towards eccentrics, divorced from any serious political or social undercurrents. This reveals Wace's sensitivity to elements that undermined his celebratory agenda too openly; but one may also note that the potentially negative features in the Latin version of the story of Bernard have been anticipated in the French text through the anecdote of the spoon and the statement concerning Richard's recruitment of his household. This is not a straightforward instance of propagandist textual editing, but rather a skilful invitation to the more discerning reader to recognize the message implied by the cumulated material offered regarding the Duke, and not just the isolated anecdotes. In other words, Wace appears to be addressing a dual readership, one of which is intended to receive the *Roman de Rou* as a straightforwardly laudatory account of the dukes of Normandy, whilst the other — probably Wace's informants in Normandy itself, his family, and fellow clerks in the ducal administration — could pick up on cues allowing them to recognize situations and events through the distorting filter of propaganda.

After Wace's somewhat ambivalent celebration of the rule of Richard II, another cluster of anecdotes appear in the *Roman de Rou* relative to Duke Robert I,

[12] See Monique Santucci, 'Le Fou dans les lettres françaises médiévales', *Les Lettres romanes*, 36 (1982), 195–211 (p. 202).

[13] This is one of a number of instances of a sharp change in collective sensitivities since the Middle Ages. On the subject, see the introduction of *Medieval Comic Tales*, ed. by Derek Brewer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1972).

son of Richard II and father of the future conqueror of England. Robert I of Normandy is depicted by the poet as a being worthy of the most exotic of romances, superlatively generous, and well deserving his sobriquet of 'the Magnificent'. The entire episode is marked by a breathtakingly skewed approach to the life of this duke, who, from the testimony of the French text, appears to have been virtually untouched by the realities of warfare, rebellion, or basic economics. Other people do the dirty work for him, leaving his hands clean — or such at least is the impression given to the reader/audience, who is not allowed any glimpse into the rather unsavoury reality presented by most medieval histories. Wace does not introduce any inaccuracies, but he reshapes the life of Robert the Magnificent by omission. Not once in the *Roman de Rou* do we see Robert taking part personally in a military campaign, even though we know his rule was far from peaceful; his attempt to invade England to restore the throne to the athelings Edward and Alfred is even said to have been thwarted by divine will, to prevent the sin of bloodshed (3^{e} Partie, lines 2761–64). There is a clear drive in the French text to whitewash this duke, who died on the way back from his pilgrimage from Jerusalem and therefore was as close to a dynastic saint as the Norman line could manage. The focus is overwhelmingly on Robert as a private person: in his bedchamber with young Arlette, future mother of his son William, and of course as a Christian pilgrim, with a series of tales illustrating his generosity, nobility, and piety on the way to Jerusalem. Prior to Robert's departure for Constantinople and the Holy Land, however, Wace includes in his account three anecdotes (two of them preserved in interpolations in the *Gesta Normannorum ducum*) situated at his court in Normandy, which have an ambiguously comical flavour and are therefore of immediate relevance to our present concern.

The first of these recalls the anecdote of the stolen spoon, though in a lighter vein; it follows the Latin source closely. One feast day at Mass, the Duke notices that one of his knights has not given anything at offertory. He therefore gives him £100 through his chamberlain so that he may do so; but to his surprise, the knight places the entire sum at the altar. Asked why he did this, the knight replies that that was why the money had been given to him. Impressed, Robert gives the knight a further £100 (in the Latin: double the money) for his own use. Like the anecdote of the stolen spoon, we have a knight who is short of cash; but as an instance of ducal munificence, this is more effective propaganda. It shows the members of the court in a more positive light, and by association, the stature of the Duke himself is enhanced: even a relatively lowly member of his retinue is endowed with a strong sense of propriety that makes him truly noble. The Duke's reward is clearly extravagant, but it is arguably deserved, contrary to Richard's treatment of the dishonest

knight. This story leads on immediately to another tale, for which no source has been preserved; it involves a cleric, who was observing Robert playing a form of backgammon ('tables') with one of his knights. A young man whose father had just died and who wished to succeed him in his lands presents a precious gold vase to the Duke, who immediately gives it to the cleric. Overwhelmed by such generosity, the cleric drops down dead of joy—a reaction that must certainly have struck Wace's medieval readers as highly comical in its incongruity; then the Duke has the gaming table removed. Wace appears to be more interested in expounding to the reader the little-known fact that it is indeed possible to die of joy than in the actual significance of this tale. Who was this young man who needed the Duke's support to succeed his father and gave such an expensive gift to secure it? Was the ostentatious passing on of the vase to the cleric an indication to the young baron that the Duke was not favourably disposed towards him? Is the morally dubious activity in which the Duke engaged of relevance to the story? Were there suspicions of foul play, making Wace feel it was necessary to stress that the cleric's death was due to natural causes? Beneath the propagandist surface, one senses a can of wriggling worms that the poet's inner circle of readers would have identified with some relish; for a more general audience, these anecdotes would simply have been entertaining tales of the extreme behaviour of a larger-than-life historical figure.

After the nobility and the clergy, the third anecdote relating to Duke Robert features a member of the labouring classes, a blacksmith from Beauvais. As with the tale of Bernard the Philosopher, Wace makes a number of modifications to his written, Latin source (another St Etienne of Caen interpolation in the *Gesta Normannorum ducum*, pp. 58–61). The French text tells us that a man came from Beauvais to give the Duke two knives he had made and was given £100 in return. As he was happily counting his money, a present of two horses was made to the Duke, who orders them to be given to the man, who then hurries away 'alcune rien ne li neüst' (3^{e} Partie, line 2400; 'so that he would not suffer any harm'). When Robert later enquires about him, wishing to give him a precious silver cup, he is nowhere to be found. The Duke deplores this, stating that if he had stayed longer, he would have left a rich and powerful man (lines 2409–12). The narrator then explains that the Duke had a custom that if he received a gift and bestowed it on someone else, he would continue to give that person all the presents sent to him that day, with the exception of foodstuffs (lines 2413–20). The reason for this, we are told is that:

> De tut se poeit saüler
> Ceo diseit il, fors de duner,
> Ne ja si grant dun ne donast
> Ke asez petit ne li semblast,

> Ne si grant ne l'eüst duné
> Ja puis fust par lui reprové. (*Rou*, 3[e] Partie, lines 2421–26)
>
> [He could be content with everything except, so he said, with giving; he had never given away such a big gift that it did not seem very small to him, nor had he given something so big that he had regretted it afterwards.] (my own translation)

The overall picture is one of uncounting, unthinking, indeed foolish generosity towards someone who was unworthy. This does not quite tally with the Latin text, where Robert's liberality was clearly a shrewd form of public relations. In the *Gesta Normannorum ducum* interpolation, the anecdote of the blacksmith of Beauvais, which is placed before that of the knight who gave the Duke's £100 to the Church, is explicitly an illustration not only of how generous Robert was, but also, crucially, of what he expected to gain from his behaviour. The opening words of the section are clear in this respect:

> Hic sane est annotandum qualiter iste uenerabilis dux Robertus non solum dictis, uerum etiam muneribus largis in se tam suorum quam exterorum hominum prouocauerit affectum.
>
> [We must most certainly note here how generous the venerable duke Robert was, not only in words but also in deed, to his own men as well as to strangers, and how much love he received in return.] (*Gesta Normannorum ducum*, pp. 58–59)

The explanation of Robert's bizarre custom of showering the same person with gifts on any given day is offered from the outset in the Latin text, rather than at the end of the story; his behaviour therefore fits into a pattern and does not appear quite as eccentric as in the French account. Moreover, the reason he gives the blacksmith his first, already disproportionately generous, gift is out of consideration for the man's feelings: 'ne pauperis hominis tantillum munus uideretur spreuisse' ('unwilling to give the impression that he despised such a small present from a poor man', pp. 58–59). On receiving the two exceptional horses in addition to his hundred Rouen pounds, the blacksmith fears he is the butt of a joke that might turn nasty and departs before anyone can take the gifts away from him. Robert's reaction at the news that the man has left his court is translated almost verbatim by Wace; but contrary to the French version, the Latin story continues. One year later, the blacksmith returns to Robert's court, accompanied this time by his two sons of whom we are told that they were 'bene instructis militaribus armis' ('well instructed in military skills', pp. 58–59): they have come to offer their services. Robert appears to have come up with a medieval form of lottery where through an effect of his apparently random generosity a man's life could be transformed: a positive incentive to join the ducal court and remain there, forging a strong bond of allegiance with this unpredictable lord.

The Latin anecdote of the blacksmith of Beauvais shows that Robert's strategy to 'win the love of many people' and inspire them to take service with him was successful. In so doing, he reinforced his personal security and political authority, as well as his reputation. By contrast, Wace appears to have seen the story essentially as an opportunity to depict Robert's court as a quasi-Arthurian locus, ruled by mysterious and seemingly irrational customs. No ulterior motive for the Duke's generosity is mentioned; neither is there any hint that it might have had some useful spin-offs on a practical level. A tale that, in the Latin, points to Robert's political acumen becomes in the *Roman de Rou* a rather futile exercise in asset-squandering. The omission by Wace of Robert's apparent welcoming around him of fighting men irrespective of their social origins can be seen as evidence of a certain snobbishness on the part of the poet; but crucially, it also gives the episode a clearly defined comic element. The man with the knives, who is so signally out of his depth socially and is never mentioned again after his hasty retreat, becomes the butt of the reader's laughter; his incongruity at such a brilliant court makes the character ridiculous and not unlike the lowborn losers mocked in the later, openly comical, *fabliau* genre.

The politically sensitive suggestion conveyed by the Latin source that Robert actually needed around him a strong retinue of men who owed everything to him, and would therefore give him their unconditional loyalty, is thus turned into a humorous aside. Viewed from the more negative perspective of Wace's source, the gesture of the knight who immediately deposited the entirety of the Duke's gift at the church altar becomes a show of independence, signalling that he did not wish to be indebted to Robert in this way. It is a form of power struggle, eventually won by the Duke who puts the knight in a position where he cannot refuse his money, and the obligation that went with it. We are not told the names of the spoon thief or the recalcitrant knight, but we can fairly surmise that they were rather better connected than the blacksmith of Beauvais. Even for the celebrated Robert the Magnificent, life at the Norman court was clearly dangerous, and such strategies as those we glimpse in these anecdotes would have been prudent, if not necessary. Quite apart from the fact that Robert himself was suspected by some of having had his own brother poisoned (a fact mentioned by William of Malmesbury[14]), the Norman nobles were only too disposed to resort to murder if it suited them; Robert's death on his return from his triumphant pilgrimage to Jerusalem is thus

[14] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, R. A. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998–99), Book ii, chap. 178 (I (1998), 308–09).

caused by poison. Wace simply states that Robert was murdered by 'un pautonier' (line 3214; 'a scoundrel'), allowing him to draw a discreet veil over the culture of violence that reigned around the Norman dukes; William of Malmesbury is less reticent and names the poisoner as a certain Ralph Mowin, whose motivation was that he had hopes of succeeding Robert to the dukedom. In other words, this was a wellborn man who must have been related to the Duke, and whose descendents may well still have been influential in Wace's day. Robert's policy of unpredictable extravagance, contrary to Richard's policy of extreme caution disguised as benign eccentricity, failed at the end to protect him.

The third duke to display unexpected, even worrying, behaviour is William the Conqueror himself. Wace provides us with a number of anecdotes where the Duke's quick thinking and willingness to act in an unconventional manner turn a potentially bad situation to his advantage, but he also shows the young Duke behaving in what is clearly an irrational way; moreover, alone of all the dukes mentioned in the *Rou*, William is actually seen relating to a 'fol', a 'genuine' fool, perceived and accepted as a madman by his society.

The history of the early life of the young Duke William reads as a succession of plots, revolts, and general discontent on the part of the Normans with having had an underage bastard imposed on them when there were legitimately born, mature, and competent contenders for the dukedom. The resentment festering around William is shown coming to a head in Wace's account in the episode known as 'the flight from Valognes', where the young Duke narrowly escapes a murder attempt while on a hunting trip:

> De prinsome eis vos un fol,
> Goles out non, un pel el col,
> a l'us de la chambre criant
> e les pareiz al pel batant.
> 'Ovrez,' dist il, 'ovrez, ovrez!
> Ja morreiz tuit, levez, levez!
> Ou giés Guilliame? por quei dorz?
> S'ateinz i es ja seras morz;
> ti anemi se vont armer
> se ci te poent ja trover
> ja mais n'iestras de Costentin,
> ne ne *vivras* jusqu'al matin.'
> Guilliame fu mult efreez
> com hoem qui fu espoëntez,
> n'ala mie enquerant noveles;
> ne li sembloent gaires beles.
> En braies ert e en chemise;
> une chape a *a* son col mise,

a son cheval mult tost se prist
e a la veie tost se mist;
ne sai s'il out nul esperon
ne se il quist nul compaignon. (*Rou*, 3ᵉ Partie, lines 3651–72)

[During the first part of the night a fool by the name of Goles suddenly arrived, with a stick around his neck, shouting at the door of the chamber and beating on the walls with his stick. 'Open up', he said, 'open up, open up! You will all be killed, get up, get up! Where are you lying, William? Why are you sleeping? If you are attacked here, you will soon be killed. Your enemies are arming themselves. If they can find you here, you will never get out of the Cotentin and not live till the morning.' William was very much afraid, and as a terrified man does, he did not ask for news, for it would scarcely have been good. He was in breeches and chemise and he put on a cloak over his shoulders, grabbed his horse very quickly and set off; I do not know whether he had any spurs or whether he sought any companion.]

This incident has no counterparts in Wace's Latin sources, and it has been argued that we may be dealing here with a duplicated, distorted version of the account of another rebellion against William, that of his uncle William of Arques:[15] in both cases, the Duke is in residence at Valognes when he hears the news from a messenger, and in both cases he immediately rides off alone. But whereas William's reaction to the conspiracy of William of Arques is depicted as heroic, galloping off to his men at Arques at such a pace that none of his companions were able to catch up with him (lines 3509–48), his response to Goles's warning is anything but. He does not make any plans, just fleeing in the night in partial undress, in a state of abject panic. He does not even know where he is going, just trusting in God to preserve him, as he does not know who has remained loyal to him (lines 3675–82). By contrast Goles, the fool, acts in a rational, sensible manner. He is aware of a conspiracy, so he immediately goes to warn the Duke, doing what it takes to wake him up in time. This eminently sane response to the situation may be one of the reasons the character of Goles has been interpreted as being a sort of court jester rather than a madman;[16] but it is significant that Benoît de Sainte-Maure, in his version of the incident, explicitly depicts him as a lunatic: 'Uns fous, uns desvez non sachanz, |

[15] Stéphane Laîné convincingly argues this case in 'La Fuite de Valognes: comparaison des différentes versions en langue vernaculaire', in *Guillaume le Conquérant face aux défis: Actes du colloque de Dives-sur-Mer des 17 et 18 Septembre 2005*, ed. by Huguette Legros (Orléans: Paradigme, 2008), pp. 93–134.

[16] Cf. for example Enid Welsford, *The Fool*: *His Social and Literary History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935), p. 114, who sees this episode of the *Rou* as one of 'the earliest indubitable references to medieval court-fools'.

Toz senz raison' (lines 32792–93; 'A fool, a witless madman, entirely devoid of reason').[17] We thus have a *monde renversé* situation, where the madman acts wisely, while the ruler acts irrationally. William's prayer is answered and he eventually meets up with friends who offer him protection and support, but the outcome has more to do with luck than any skill, planning, or political nous on the Duke's part.

The image of a flustered, scared, and laughably unimpressive William is all the more striking for the fact that Wace recounts the incident after the rebellion of William of Arques, which the young Duke had handled with authority and in a purposeful manner: the impression given to the reader is therefore that it took place later in time, when William was older and could therefore have been expected to react with greater maturity. There is also the issue of the nature of the messenger who triggered his flight. Goles was known to be a fool — indeed, the stick around his neck announced the fact to the world[18] — so why did William just take his word for it? Would it not have been more natural for the Duke to try to ignore his yelling, or at least, take time to reflect whether this news was likely or not? Wace's statement (line 3665) that William did not even consider checking the reliability of Goles's message suggests that this is what might reasonably have been expected of him, rather than aimlessly rushing out in the night. The overall effect is farcical.

The Valognes incident is not the only instance in the *Roman de Rou* of William acting in a way that does not sit well with the image of power and determination one associates with the Conqueror. The second incident where the Duke loses his nerve occurs when he hears that Harold has been crowned King of England:

> sovent a son mantel lacié
> et sovent l'a desatachié
> ne il a home ne parla,
> ne hoem a lui parler n'osa.
> A un batel Seigne passa,
> a sa sale vint, enz entra,
> al chief d'un banc s'est acostez,
> d'ores en altres s'est tornez,
> de son mantel covri son vis,
> sor un pecol son chief a mis;

[17] Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, ed. by Carin Fahlin, 2 vols, Bibliotheca Ekmaniana Universitatis Regiae Upsaliensis, 56 and 60 (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1951–54). My translation.

[18] On the attributes of the fool, see D. J. Gifford, 'Iconographical Notes Towards a Definition of the Medieval Fool', in *The Fool and the Trickster: Studies in Honour of Enid Welsford*, ed. by Paul V. A. Williams (Cambridge: Brewer; Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield, 1979), pp. 18–35.

issi pensa li dus grant pose,
que l'en a lui parler nen ose. (*Rou*, 3ᶜ Partie, lines 5861–72)

[He repeatedly laced up his mantle and repeatedly untied it; he spoke to no one and no one dared speak to him. He crossed the Seine by boat, came to his hall, entered and leant on the edge of a bench, turning this way and that, covering his face with his cloak; he laid his head on the arm-rest. In this way the duke reflected for a long time, without anyone daring to speak to him.]

There are similarities between this scene and the incident at Valognes: in both cases, William reacts to shock by trying to escape the crisis rather than confronting it. The image of the Duke curled up on a bench, his head covered by his cloak, carries overtones of a symbolic return to the warmth, darkness, and security of the womb — as real a flight from unpleasant reality as his reckless galloping in the dark. This is not how strong leaders are supposed to behave. The obsessive playing with cloak laces then the prolonged sulk are of course an indication of inner turmoil, but the first reaction to William's initial response is surely that it is rather amusing, because so extreme, so unexpected, so undignified. Yet, in context, we do not laugh at the young duke. This is partly because we know that, in this instance as at Valognes, William has unwittingly done the right thing: having mulled over his despondency, he is more receptive to advice; and this advice, brutally given by his seneschal, leads to William's greatest achievement: the conquest of England. More crucially, however, Wace makes it clear that laughter is not an appropriate response through the twice-repeated statement that none of the Duke's retainers dared to speak to him; William wriggling under his cloak is a cause for fear.

The decision to mount a campaign to gain the English throne against Harold is in many ways the greatest folly of William's life. The initial impetus, stressed by his seneschal, is the need for revenge (lines 5911–16); this is what snaps the Duke out of his introspective mood. Thereafter, his motivations become more complex, but there is a therapeutic dimension to William's embracing the idea of warfare, which has little to do with hardheaded politics. Indeed, the English campaign is undertaken without the support of the King of France, the future Conqueror's suzerain (lines 6181–6248); without the support of the Count of Flanders (his brother-in-law, according to Wace, line 6251); and even without the support of the Norman barons, whose refusal to go on an expedition overseas is ignored and whose promise of military assistance is tricked out of them by William's cunning seneschal. The Duke is thus acting like an outsider to his own society, with which he seems to have little empathy. Only the pope supports William's ambitions: this is a campaign that never should have been and that no one could have foreseen would be victorious. The wealth of anecdotes in the *Roman de Rou* relating the bad

omens and setbacks suffered by the Norman army confirm William's apparent refusal to see things as they are.

William's folly is of a different nature to the eccentricities of his forebears: whereas their behaviour was the result of a conscious policy aimed at preserving their power and authority, the Conqueror, when under stress, acts in an impulsive, even irrational manner. He seems to take key decisions as the result of a gamble, the odds of which are not necessarily in his favour; yet things turn out well (for him, at least). The unrest among the Norman barons, which led to the incident of Valognes, is quelled at the battle of Val-ès-Dunes; the English campaign makes the Duke into a King. The lesson to be learned, Wace seems to be intimating, is that what distinguishes outstanding leaders from the merely great is a streak of folly — aided by a large helping of divine providence. And even though their behaviour might sometimes seem to be ridiculous, only a fool would dare to laugh.

'Marcel far to helle: ⁊ tel heom þer spelles' (*Brut*, line 13245): 'Off' Jokes and Crude Behaviour in Lawman's *Brut*

Rosamund Allen

The very short shelf life of acceptable humour makes it difficult to be sure we have identified the jokes in medieval texts. Nevertheless, it must be the case that in literature which was designed to be read aloud there will have been strong rapport between reciter and audience. Inevitably any charismatic reader — by which I mean Joyce Coleman's 'prolector' figure — will have caught the eye of his audience many a time and raised a titter, probably reinforced by a gesture, innocent or lewd according to the audience.[1] Humour generated between reciter and audience generates a bond and allows the reader to manipulate more serious response where required. But by 'seeing the funny side' the reader can also be disengaged from the text, with the serious intention of challenging the content of the material. An author may thus undermine the traditional expectations of the genre in which he is ostensibly writing, or a reader — silent or performative — may subvert material into parody by 'overegging' what the author wrote. Humour, whether authorial or 'prolectorial', may accordingly be intended either to construct a new level of meaning or to strip away an existing one. And it seems reasonable to suppose that the author of even the most serious text will have prepared his material to accommodate just such a humorous engagement. In other words, even 'long and boring' texts must have had some element of humour in them to arouse flagging interest.

[1] Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), passim.

While in no way suggesting that Lawman's *Brut* is boring, I want to identify passages in *The Brut* which seem to me to be intended as jokes. The problem with seven-hundred-year-old humour is how to identify which are the intended jokes. Though there are some touches which we can laugh at today, we need to make clear distinction between what we find amusing and what, at least as far as we can tell, Lawman designed to be humorous. Sometimes we laugh at the wrong things, and what we find 'funny bits' are unlikely to have been intended so. Conversely, some parts which seem repugnant may well have been intended humorously. Sometimes what was surely meant to amuse requires contextualizing in the historical and political time-frame of Lawman's era and has perhaps now passed its sell-by date. The majority, indeed, falls into this category, which is perhaps why Lawman's *Brut* is not readily associated with the word humour. However, I think that Lawman did have a sense of humour, which triggers subtle insights into characterization and interpretation. I hope to identify Lawman's humour in this paper and to interpret its function within *The Brut* by assessing fluctuations in tone within the text and contrasting the differing audience responses to the comic in the modern period.

Many of the now dubious passages relate to violence and death. Lawman is often said to extol violence, and it is my wish here to offer an alternative interpretation of such passages as black comedy designed to alert the audience to respond to the text in a partisan way. Such a case is the punningly grotesque behaviour of Walwain (Gawain) towards Marcel's corpse which is represented in my title.

In the climactic stages of Arthur's attempt to conquer Rome, Walwain has accompanied Arthur's ambassadors to the Emperor Lucius as their translator. As if in anticipation of Malory's hot-headed Sir Gawayne, in a fit of anger during the audience, Walwain splits the Emperor Lucius's nephew Quencelin into two halves, and the British embassy withdraws with untoward haste. The understandably enraged Romans set off in frenzied pursuit. In the course of this, Walwain turns back to attack the pursuers, among them a Roman named Marcel. Walwain can understand Marcel's Latin taunts of cowardice because he himself was educated in Rome. Having spitted him on his spear Walwain addresses his own taunts to Marcel's now headless corpse:

> Marcel, far to helle: ȝ tel heom þer spelles.
> and wune þer to-ȝere: mid Quencelin þin ifere.
> and haldeþ þer unker rune: betere inc weoren inne Rome.
> for þus we eou scullen techen: ure Bruttisce speche. (*Brut*, lines 13245–48)

> [Marcel, go to hell, and to those there tales tell,
> And live there to unending date with Quencelin who's your mate,

> And there hold secret conclave. In Rome you'd've both been safe!
> For that's how we'll teach you our own British speech.][2]

The joke (if it is) is that the two halves of Quencelin and the headless Marcel in hell are to hold 'secret' talk (*rune*) — which, as they are headless, means 'wordless'. For the same reason they will obviously find their lessons in Ancient British rather hard to master. A dubious joke, but Lawman and his thirteenth-century audience would have found the humour fully justified because Lucius and his followers have abandoned Christianity (*Brut*, line 13636); perhaps the bad taste itself would also be regarded as punitive, a rejection of heathenism. Lawman may have been writing in the second decade of the thirteenth century, even as Innocent III was canvassing for another crusade.

Walwain's taunting of Marcel must be another instance of what Tom Shippey has already identified in Old English as 'not funny' to the modern reader.[3] It is a racial taunt directed at the physically disadvantaged (not least because dead), the stuff of modern vaudeville and current TV comic turns, but somehow not 'correct' in a chronicle of the deeds of kings. There seems to be clear evidence that it is meant to be amusing, however. Lawman's grotesque rhymes point up this passage, arousing audience attention and preparing for the joke. In Wace's *Roman de Brut*, Lawman's source text, there is a far more decorous version of this episode, faintly tinged with irony: Walwein 'courteously' ('par curteisie', *Roman*, line 11832) invites Marcel to carry to Quintilien in hell the message that the British are confident of claiming their rights.[4] In Wace's *Roman* Walwein addresses Marcel just after Bos has thrust a sword down a Roman knight's throat telling him to enjoy the choice morsel. Battle ardour does not sharpen wit. Lawman relishes this joke too, but unfortunately he has already used it, when Uther kills Passent (it is not present there in Wace, incidentally) by banging him on the head and thrusting a sword into his mouth: 'swulc mete him wes uncuð' (*Brut*, line 9028; such food was a new experience for him), remarks the narrator drily. Having anticipated that joke, Lawman here supplies one of his own. The role of authorial intervention, identified as one

[2] All quotations are from *Laȝamon: Brut*, ed. by G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, 2 vols, EETS, o.s. 250 and 277 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963–78). Translations from Lawman's *Brut* are my own, for the purposes of this paper designed to be literal but with indication of rhyme.

[3] Tom Shippey, '"Grim Wordplay": Folly and Wisdom in Anglo-Saxon Humor', in *Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 33–48 (p. 34).

[4] Lines 11833–38. Citations and translations from Wace are from *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, ed. and trans. by Judith Weiss, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002).

of the 'frames' indicating humorous intention, is discussed by Walter Nash.[5] Nash also, and helpfully, highlights the 'performance element' in humour; in my view, Lawman's *Brut* was indeed intended to be read aloud, like most medieval books. Even supposing it had an audience of but one at any time, it would still have been sounded rather than read silently; Nash, moreover, admits that 'the receptive and sympathetic reader can also, in his way, perform, soundlessly reconstructing the sound of the text'.[6]

Here I must draw attention to the significance of sound — and by implication, voice — in the reception of Lawman's work. Although Lawman produces 'full' rhymes throughout his poem, and increasingly in the later sections, when read aloud *The Brut* resounds with sound echoes. For example, Lawman 'rhymes' liquids with each other, hence [øle]/[ele] and [ere] form a sound iteration.[7] Rhymes and similar sounding words provide opportunities for punning and satirical observations on inimical characters.

The merry dispatching of enemies is a commonplace of heroic narrative. Lawman especially enjoys their demise if they are pagan. As T. McAlindon shows, burlesquing of contests with devils, dragons, and giants is commonplace in later medieval saints' lives and romances.[8] But Lawman as commentator is more subtle and creates a historical as well as theological divide, inviting the audience/reader to see both distance and similarity between their own mores and those of characters in the British past. As a parish priest, he is fierce in the defence of his own faith.[9] The Saxon invader Hengest (*Brut*, line 8346) and the Scythian Melga (*Brut*, line 6425) are both sent downwards with the prayer that they will *not* find salvation. Melga and his fellow pirate Wanis suffer the additional indignity of being torn apart by women, like Ovid's Orpheus; in Wace the two pirates are simply 'conquered' off-stage (Wace, *Roman*, lines 6435–36). Again, the episode is pointed by rhyme:

[5] Walter Nash, *The Language of Humour: Style and Technique in Comic Discourse*, English Language Series, 16 (London: Longman, 1985), pp. 167–68.

[6] Nash, *Language of Humour*, pp. 170–72 (p. 172).

[7] See Rosamund Allen, '"Nv seið mid loftsong": A Re-appraisal of Lawman's Verse Form', in *Laȝamon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*, ed. by Rosamund Allen, Lucy Perry, and Jane Roberts, King's College London Medieval Studies, 19 (London: King's College London, 2002), pp. 251–82.

[8] T. McAlindon, 'The Emergence of a Comic Type in Middle-English Narrative: The Devil and Giant as Buffoon', *Anglia*, 81 (1963), 365–71.

[9] See Eric Stanley, 'Laȝamon: Priest and Historiographer', in *Laȝamon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*, ed. by Allen, Perry, and Roberts, pp. 3–24.

> Þa quenen lude loȝen: ȝ al hine to-droȝen.
> ȝ beden for þere seole: þat hire neuere sæl nere. (*Brut*, lines 6424–25)
>
> [The women laughed exultantly and tore them completely to pieces
> And prayed for their souls: that there should be no salvation for them!][10]

Laughter in Lawman's *Brut* is mainly of this kind, the full-throated bellow of battle triumph, here given a dimension of incongruity by being vented by women. Although the 'happiness' lexicon is present in Lawman's *Brut*, and individuals and especially the British people collectively are frequently said to be 'glad', 'muri', and 'bliðe' and to experience 'blisse', very few people actually laugh or smile in this text.[11] When they do, things are about to go wrong, for one party or the other. When Uther *loh* ('smiled, looked fondly') at Igerne her husband grew incensed and stirred up insurrection (*Brut*, line 9253).[12] When the Giant of Mont St Michel 'to þan wiue loh' (*Brut*, line 12965; grinned at the woman [Eleine's old nurse]) he was about to rape her. More sinisterly still, as Vortimer smiles into Rowenne's face, she extracts an ampulle of poison from her breast and slips it into his wine cup (*Brut*,

[10] Compare the narrator's comment on the dead giantess Barrok in *Sowdone of Babylone*: 'Might she never after ete more brede' (*The English Charlemagne Romances*, Part V: *The Romance of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras his Sone who Conquerede Rome*, ed. by E. Hausknecht, EETS, e.s. 38 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1881; repr. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2002), line 2953), cited by McAlindon, 'Emergence of a Comic Type', p. 370.

[11] The occurrences in the *Brut* of words denoting joy and welfare are as follows: *glad/gladien* 25; *murie* 'pleasant, happy' 21; *bliðe/bluðeliche* 90; *blisse* 94; *sel(e)* (as sb and vb) */selest/sellic/selie/selehðe* (meanings range from 'good/brave' through 'blessed' to 'pleasant/happy' and 'fortunate', the last not noted in the *MED*) 92. The verb *lihȝen/loh/lohȝen* and the related noun *le(a)htre(n)* apparently occur only thirteen times in all: seven of these are in male/female interactive contexts (lines 615, 1521, 6424, 7474, 7480, 9253, 12966); one marks Vortigern's delight at gaining power (line 6669); the other five are cries of exultation in battle by Arthur and the British (lines 10391, 10692, 11187, 11836, 11970). Hugh Magennis, 'Images of Laughter in Old English Poetry, with Particular Reference to the "Hleahtor Wera" of *The Seafarer*', *English Studies*, 73 (1992), 193–204, has found a similarly limited incidence of 'laughter' in the Anglo-Saxon poetic corpus: twenty-two cases, to which Shippey would add a twenty-third (Shippey, '"Grim Wordplay"', p. 35).

[12] Middle High German seems not to distinguish between smiling and laughing (noted by Sebastian Coxon, 'Laughter in German Medieval Comic Stories', paper delivered to London Medieval Society, 13 March 2003), which may also be true of Old French, while *smearcian* 'smile' is a very rare verb in Old and Middle English. However, John Burrow, commenting on Philippe Ménard's conclusion that *sourire* 'always refers to smiles' ('*sub*ridere') but '*rire* can refer to smiles as well as laughs', suggests that medieval people may have had different 'display rules' and laughed where we would only smile (John Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 76–80).

lines 7474, 7480). Arthur and the British three times laugh exultantly and get away with it (*Brut*, lines 10391, 10692, 11970). One senses, though, that Lawman shared St Benedict's warning against unbridled mirth: better to live 'mid muchelre blisse' (*Brut*, line 5031) and be quietly happy, for Jesus came 'leoden to blisse' (*Brut*, line 5447, to the joy of the peoples), than to attempt too much fun and excitement.[13] Because Maximien is too *murie* (*Brut*, line 5832), too content, fearing no one, he ventures to become Roman Emperor and in so doing denudes Britain of its much-needed warriors.

Fun, then, is precarious in Lawman's *Brut*, and ribald humour is absent, but there are many moments where situational irony, harmless buffoonery, and verbal wit and punning seem to be present. As far as I can tell, these instances are designed and not inadvertently comic, but this is always very difficult to assess. What is humorous to one culture and one age group is not to another. The radio presenter Terry Wogan recorded in April 2002 his belief that those who think Reeves and Mortimer are funny and can understand Ali G. are not the Morecambe and Wise generation who laughed at Tony Hancock and The Goons, and who in their turn were left cold by Charlie Chaplin and the Marx brothers. If tastes in humour really last only three or four decades, modern readers cannot hope to catch all the nuances of *medieval* humour. Difference in taste is apparent even in the two decades or less separating Geoffrey of Monmouth and his French translator Wace (and perhaps a supplementer of Wace's *Roman*): Geoffrey merely mentions the entertainments at Arthur's crownwearing: 'diversi diversos ludos componunt et extra ciuitatem per campos et prata se diffundunt; alii cestibus, alii palestra, alii aleis ac diuersis lusibus diem illam iocunde consumpserunt'.[14] Wace, writing for courtiers, looks askance, taking us behind the scenes to see the pressures this great society inflicts on the scurrying supply trains, the servants and ostlers needed to produce the celebrations, and then shows how the splendour evaporates when the games

[13] St Benedict's dictum is noted by Magennis, who suggests that references to laughter in hall joys, not found in Old Saxon and not typical of Old Norse, may have been prompted by rare biblical references to 'the laughter of a life of joy', citing Job 8. 21, but laughter 'should be tempered always with moderation': some saints were never seen to laugh (Magennis, 'Images of Laughter', pp. 198–99, 201).

[14] *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, vol. II: *The First Variant Version: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), cap. 157, p. 151; 'they went out in different directions in the fields and meadows outside the city; various men contended in various games; these with boxing, those with wrestling, others with a wide variety of games they happily spent the day'.

degenerate from hard physical contest to gambling, and those who lose go home shirtless.[15] Wace's humour is dependent on high-status economy but sets the aristocracy in their place: they are not idealized and are dependent on a vast and essential infrastructure whose efforts realize the wealth and panoply of the great society.

Geographical as well as social differences affect the reception of jokes. Mark Twain thought that American humor was not the same as English humour (though he failed to remark the additional joke of the spelling difference).[16] But American humor itself has changed since then, absorbing multicultural influences: it is no longer acceptable to laugh at other cultures.[17] Political correctness outlaws jokes against physical and mental disability. The twenty-first century finds medieval humour racist and intolerant of the physically disadvantaged. Equally, the steady levelling of class distinctions makes much English humour obsolete, such as P. G. Wodehouse's playing off Bertie Wooster against Jeeves, and the obtuseness of Margot in the TV comedy *The Good Life*.[18] The status distinctions on which medieval fabliaux depend are increasingly obscure to many students.

[15] *Wace's Roman de Brut*, ed. by Weiss, lines 10337–58, 10555–88.

[16] 'Americans are not Englishmen, and American humor is not English humo[u]r: but both the American and his humor had their origin in England, and have merely undergone changes brought about by changed conditions and environment': cited in Lawrence E. Mintz, 'Humor and Popular Culture', in *Handbook of Humor Research*, ed. by Paul E. McGhee and Jeffrey H. Goldstein (New York: Springer, 1983), pp. 129–42 (p. 133). Harry Levin explains the spelling 'humour' as French influenced and explores the development of the modern meaning ('Introduction', in *Veins of Humor*, ed. by Harry Levin, Harvard Studies, 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 1–16).

[17] 'The use of ethnic humor in American society is under greater constraints than at any time in the past, especially in the public domain': Mahadev L. Apte, 'Ethnic Humor Versus "Sense of Humor": An American Sociocultural Dilemma', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 30 (1987), 27–41 (p. 27).

[18] D. J. Taylor, reviewing three reminiscent studies of British humour of the 1960s and 1970s ('Is it Goodnight From Them?', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 November 2001, p. 18) concludes that comedy of that so-called 'golden age' of humour depends not on class but on an obsession with status and the imposition of personality on colleagues and subordinates: 'It would be impossible to imagine any classic English comedy taking place in a society that had achieved genuine social equality'. In Taylor's opinion, the languid aristocrat Wilson (John le Mesurier) in Dad's army who is bossed by the middle-class grammar school–educated Captain Mainwaring (Arthur Lowe) 'only matters if languid aristocrats have any kind of social position [...] in an age where class, status and position are as fluid as the audience that still, mysteriously, relishes their exposure, comedy's room for manoeuvre becomes ever more limited'.

Humour theorists have observed that humour crosses language boundaries more easily than spatial distance, even when TV companies import each others' products across the Atlantic: Rowan Atkinson's Mr Bean is apparently not much appreciated in the USA.[19] Distance in time and alien cultural assumptions create even greater barriers: Oscar Wilde's wit seems to raise little laughter at screenings of Oliver Parker's film version of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2002).[20] What was presumably funny for an original medieval audience may leave us cold or even hostile. But the converse is even more significant: what seems hilarious to us may have been intended seriously. As Tom Shippey remarks of Anglo-Saxon humour, we are not only in danger of belittling or even missing medieval humour, we may actually be amused by incidents which are not intended to be funny.[21] An instance of this is the way Lawman's Godlac, having just had a desperate message from his mistress that she has been forcibly married to Brennes, faints dead away while seated on his throne of state. We laugh at this lapse of dignity, but this was probably shocking rather than funny for a medieval audience for whom a king commanded a great mystique;[22] since the faint is the classic indicator of deep emotion in medieval romance, this should be moving rather than amusing.[23]

Alterity tells us as much about ourselves as about the medieval 'other': contrasting attitudes highlight what we may not have noticed about ourselves. The

[19] Tim Healey believes that '[t]he study of humour is inseparable from considerations of history and geography' and that '[m]ere topicality is less important than whole cultural attitudes, which are best expressed in folk humour, songs, jokes and slang expressions. These often cross language barriers rather more easily than the less tangible difficulties of remoteness in distance and time'; see 'Culture Bias in Attitudes to Humour', in *It's a Funny Thing, Humour*, ed. by Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot (Oxford: Pergamon, 1977), p. 464. However, George Orwell's designation of the joke as a rebellion in miniature pinpoints the local and topical operation of humour.

[20] John Stokes's review of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, dir. by Oliver Parker (Miramax Films, 2002), *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 September 2002, p. 19, reminds us of how, as the play has become more dated, successive directors have turned the historical distance to scenic advantage.

[21] Shippey, '"Grim Wordplay"', pp. 33–34.

[22] Similarly, Hugh Magennis warns that apparently humorous incidents in saints' lives, such as St Edmund's severed head calling out among the brambles, were probably intended to inspire religious awe in the audience at God's intervention in the course of nature, rather than 'to amuse or excite mirth' (Hugh Magennis, 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Heaven: Humorous Incongruity in Old English Saints' Lives', in *Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Wilcox, pp. 137–57 (pp. 142–43)).

[23] Lawman may also have been making a mildly satiric comment on the romance genre in this allusion to its idiom.

danger of 'being led astray by cultural assumptions' is highlighted by John D. Niles, who reminds us that if we inject our own ideas about humour into a text, 'We will have gained a substitute for the poem, and in a few years the laugh will be on us'.[24] And where humour is concerned, the question of taste obtrudes. Even if we suspect a scene or remark is meant to be funny, we may not be willing to accept this unfamiliar reduction of experience to ridicule. The problem is further compounded when the cultural perceptions of modern critics are at variance, illustrated most pointedly by a failure to agree on what is 'ironic' in medieval narrative, or how far Old English wordplay really extends. The musicologist Christopher Page has commented that our performances of medieval music may not correspond at all to the way it was originally played; what we are performing (or what we are laughing at) is 'us'; medieval people thought and were, in his opinion, 'different'.[25]

Our own tastes in humour may therefore block our reception of medieval pathos. One major modern source of contemporary entertainment, the animated cartoon, can mislead our responses to earlier texts: in cartoons, as in medieval fabliaux, pain and disfigurement are the product of comic reversal, and their effects on the sufferer are ignored or laughed at — especially if they are cartoon animals or medieval artisans. Derek Brewer, appraising the harsh comedy of the medieval fabliau, speaks of the

> ancient archaic world of popular derisive humour which depends upon a total lack of sympathy with the victims and with those who do not conform to the norms of that world [...] an extraordinarily narrow world, concentrating [...] on material pleasure [...] conspicuous for its dishonesty, treachery, brutality, unfairness and unkindness.[26]

[24] John D. Niles, 'Byrhtnoth's Laughter and the Poetics of Gesture', in *Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Wilcox, pp. 11–32 (p. 32). Karma Lochrie presents an important discussion of the need to read texts in their own cultural and political context in 'Gender, Sexual Violence, and the Politics of War in the Old English *Judith*', in *Class and Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections*, ed. by Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994), pp. 1–20. By studying laughter in *Le Morte Darthur*, Arthur Wayne Glowka ('Malory's Sense of Humor', *Arthurian Interpretations*, 1 (1986), 39–46) decides that 'Malory shares humor with many people today', and his knights mostly laugh at slapstick, and at unknightly comments, puns, witticisms, when they recognize comrades, but nevertheless 'the reader has to take Malory's word for who or what is funny' (p. 39); the main agent of humour is Dinadan, but situational irony also occurs (my thanks to Professor Glowka for supplying this reference). John V. Kelleher is also uncertain how to assess such episodes as Conall Cernall eating Mac Datho's giant pig's tail, feeling sure however that 'this passage was not meant to be taken ponderously' ('Humor in the Ulster Saga', in *Veins of Humor*, ed. by Levin, pp. 35–56 (p.46)).

[25] BBC Radio 4 Broadcast, 23 April 2002.

[26] *Medieval Comic Tales*, ed. by Derek Brewer, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), p. xxiv.

But an audience whose males of all ranks were exposed continually to appalling wounds in martial combat, and whose females had the unenviable task of mending them, may not have found hysterically funny the systematic demolition of Lawman's Herigal in what to us is a proto-animated cartoon, very reminiscent of the Black Knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. King Cassibellaunus's nephew Herigal squabbles fatally with Evelyn, nephew of Androgeus, another nephew of the king, during a fencing match at the celebratory games following Caesar's defeat:

> ærst heo pleoweden: and seoðde pliht makeden.
> þer Herigal smat Æuelin: swiðe vuele a þane chin.
> Heo bigunnen to chiden: cnihtes come riden.
> Euelin wes swiðe wrað: ⁊ mid þan stæue to-draf.
> and smat Herigal a þon ribben: þat þe stæf to-bræc amidden. (*Brut*, lines 4062–66)
>
> [First they were playing and then started quarrelling;
> There Herigal struck Evelyn very hard upon the chin.
> Then they embarked on insults; knights rode up to intervene.
> Evelyn was much enraged and struck out with the stake
> And hit Herigal in the ribs so the stake snapped in the midst.]

Herigal then cries out 'that really hurt' ('þat is swiðe sar', line 4067) and vows to get his own back on the now weaponless Evelyn, who panics on realizing his opponent now wants to kill him. But it is Herigal who dies when Evelyn grabs a sword from a bystander and proceeds to butcher him, removing nose, forehead, and right hand, and then slicing him in two. The game is over: Herigal lies dead (*Brut*, lines 4079–84). This is farcical for us, but surely for Lawman's audience this is yet another instance of the text's leitmotif of relatives at variance. If there is a touch of comedy in the episode, it comes later, when Evelyn's uncle, the turncoat Androgeus, gives Julius Caesar a sanitized version of the fight. According to Androgeus:

> Euelin wes swiðe of-dred. for me him dead bi-hæhte:
> ⁊ smat on Herigales *sceld*. þat his stæf atwaie wond: (*Brut*, lines 4202–03, my italics)
>
> [Evelyn was terrified because he was being threatened with death,
> And struck at Herigal's *shield* so that his staff split in two.]

Any alert listener would have registered Herigal's serial dismemberment and would realize the two accounts did not match: it was Evelyn who first struck with a weapon, in retaliation for being punched, and Herigal's rage and Evelyn's panic follow, not precede, this blow. Androgeus is covering up for Evelyn and using Herigal as a diplomatic pawn: he wants to account for his own grievance against Cassibellaunus, whom he accuses of punishing Evelyn and himself unfairly, and to justify his decision to support Caesar instead. This is political comment rather than slapstick.

Incongruity of this kind figures in several situations in Lawman's *Brut*, as in many medieval texts. Perhaps we can call it irony; it does depend on a disparity of perceptions, between characters in the plot or between plot action and contemporary audience. With some readjustment of our own assumptions, it may work on us too. Walwain is not the only character who plays on another the 'language lesson' joke. In Marcel's case the joke is that the outsider Walwain's minority language (British) will soon become the lingua franca, and Latin, the koinë of the civilized world, will cease to be the language of the Empire and of international communication, if Arthur's Britons conquer the Roman Empire — as we of course know they will not.[27] Arthur plays the same linguistic joke when he captures the Roman commander Petreius and offers him a free lesson in ancient British. He even extends the game: Petreius had boasted of taking all Arthur's French castles, so Arthur throws in the generous gift of his castle in Paris — but as Petreius's perpetual prison rather than his campaign pretorium (*Brut*, lines 13395–99). Uther also donates property to a beaten enemy by this questionably comic reversal: he taunts Passent and Gillomaur, who wanted all Britain, with the offer of that bit of it on which they are lying dead and remarks that they are welcome to a long stay and will not need to worry about their food supply (*Brut*, lines 9030–36).

For us this is rather childish humour. So too is Walwain's playing games with Marcel's name and rhyming it with 'hell'. Children demote feared authority figures by humorously distorting their names: a very authoritarian head-teacher surnamed Hilton was dubbed 'Hitler' by pupils.[28] But fear plays its part in Walwain's taunt too: hell may seem a fable to us as to Marlowe's Faustus, but its reality would be

[27] The literate among Lawman's audience would have relished the irony, realizing that Lawman's material derived ultimately from a book which Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed to have translated from 'British' into Latin, a procedure which would have been superfluous had Arthur succeeded. On the composition of Lawman's audience, see W. R. J. Barron, 'The Idiom and the Audience of Laȝamon's *Brut*', in *Laȝamon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*, ed. by Allen, Perry, and Roberts, pp. 157–84.

[28] 'There is a strong tendency to distort proper names in order to find a meaning by which their owners may be attacked or mockingly exposed' (Martha Wolfenstein, *Children's Humor: A Psychological Analysis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), p. 75). Such humour forms a 'brief triumph over distress' (ibid., p. 12) but corresponds to stringent name taboos in other cultures where 'names are fraught with danger' (p. 76). 'Humour is quite regularly used in a generally unsystematic [...] though routine manner, to reinforce the "world-view", values and norms of the "Establishment" and to ridicule and invalidate those who constitute a threat' (Chris Powell, 'Humour as a Form of Social Control: A Deviance Approach', in *It's a Funny Thing, Humour*, ed. by Chapman and Foot, pp. 53–55 (p. 55).

undisputed by Lawman's audience; playing rhyming games on the word is a way of gaining control of that feared place by consigning a hated, inferior, enemy to its depths. Arthur and Uther are also joking away the threat presented so recently by their now conquered but politically very dangerous foes.

Humour is used to deflect contemporary social as well as personal anxieties. This is probably the function of the notorious fight in Arthur's hall. This fight over precedence is a parody of the 'fight in the hall' topos, represented by the scop in *Beowulf* (lines 1065–1159) who recites the lay of racial conflict at Finnsburh. Lawman's Arthur has conquered the territories of Northern Europe, and hostages from each subject land now reside at his court. The fight in Arthur's hall, however, resembles a St Trinian's film set: not arrows and spears but bread and goblets of wine are chucked about, and then throats are grabbed (*Brut*, lines 11367–70). Lawman has just described the elaborate decorum of serving these very items of food to each rank in turn (*Brut*, lines 11363–66). The fight over precedence between different racial groups is a comic reversal of etiquette. But in dramatizing disruption, the episode exorcizes fear of social disorder generally and more specifically of conflict between the barons and the king (especially applicable if Lawman was writing in King John's reign).[29] It probably *was* amusing, precisely because its implications were frightening,[30] but if we laugh at it from the perspective of our supposed emotional superiority and social equality, we may be misreading Lawman's text. Situation comedy relies for its impact on the audience's familiarity with the cultural resonances of that situation. Even so, this is not to say that our laughter is wholly out of place: the point is that solemnity has been dispelled. The source of

[29] Rosamund Allen, '*Eorles* and *Beornes*: Contextualizing Lawman's *Brut*', *Arthuriana*, 8 (1998), 4–22 (pp. 8–10). If a later date is claimed for Lawman's *Brut*, there is still political relevance in the relatives of his wife Eleanor and the associates of his half-brothers, the hated Poitevins whom Henry III introduced to court in great numbers. Arthur's problem is that of a multiracial court stemming from his colonial conquests with so many status-conscious hostages (*Brut*, lines 11347–56).

[30] 'To be able to laugh at evil and error means that we have surmounted them': Carl G. Jung, *Comedy*, ed. by Wylie Sypher (Garden City: Doubleday, 1956), p. 246, cited in Frank J. MacHovec, *Humor: Theory, History, Applications* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1988), p. 83. Among the functions of humour MacHovec identifies the acceptance of pain and death (pp. 20–23); but Pirandello, whose world view is far darker, detects a shadow, an 'opposite' at the heart of humanity which the humorist arrives at by reflection and exposes, while the artistic creator presents characters as coherent, as ideal simplifications (Luigi Pirandello, *On Humor*, introd., trans., and annotated by Antonio Illiano and Daniel P. Testa (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 118–45).

disturbance is in fact Arthur's military success, which by bringing together representatives of many different nationalities from his 'empire', has actually produced a multicultural society. The fear we impute to Arthur's court is after all our own.

We laugh for different reasons at the same things, just as we do not all laugh at the same things. How one categorizes, or even defines, humour has often perplexed theorists, whose explanations of human amusement include Superiority, Incongruity, Psychoanalytical, and Cognitive (or Paradoxical) Theories.[31]

It is quite possible that recent analyses of humour may be valid for medieval humour, but changing tastes in modern humour alter our responses to medieval texts. Chaucer is no longer principally recognized as a comic writer (we should have taken him more seriously): Gordon H. Gerould observed in 1952 that 'the common view of [Chaucer] as predominantly a jester, though a jester of genius, has tended to obscure certain elements of his art which are nevertheless very important'.[32] Yet Morton Bloomfield considers that Chaucer's humour has since then been ignored, admitting that it is difficult to appreciate Chaucerian humour as Chaucer passes 'into a meta-universe in which laughter becomes gloom and gloom laughter'.[33] Equally, we must concede that Lawman may have a sense of humour, and that the way Lawman's humour works may yet be eluding us (are we taking *him* too seriously?). Rather easier to identify than the rationale of humour are the topics which have since the time of the ancient Greeks formed its constant targets:

[31] Eight theories of humour are discussed by MacHovec: Derision/Superiority, Disappointment/Frustrated Expectation, Pleasure/Pain, Instinct/Physiology, Sympathy/Empathy, Creativity/Change, Semantics/Content Analysis, and Syzygy Theory. The exponents selected for the first seven of these theories are Plato, Aristotle, Freud, Darwin, Rogers, Bergson, Koestler, and Rankin. Syzygy Theory, proposed by MacHovec, admits each of the others eclectically as appropriate to each the mechanics (process) of each instance of humour, and its polarity (on a curve from negative to positive in the 'feeling tone'); it is assessed in terms of the power (impact on the audience) of the humorous utterance. Lawman's humour largely corresponds to Freud's view that the playfulness drive when it becomes aggressive 'changes the original indifferent hearers into active haters and scorners' (MacHovec, *Humor*, p. 52). See also M. Eastman, *The Sense of Humor* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1922) and *Enjoyment of Laughter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), and Nash, *Language of Humour*, especially pp. 166–72. For a summary and appraisal of recent work on humour theory, see also Robert Storey, 'A Critique of Recent Theories of Laughter and Humor with Special Reference to the Comedy of *Seinfeld*', *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies: A Journal of Criticism and Theory*, 2 (2001), 75–92.

[32] Gordon H. Gerould, 'The Serious Mind of Chaucer', in *Chaucerian Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), chap. 5, pp. 81–93 (p. 82), cited by Morton W. Bloomfield, 'The Gloomy Chaucer', in *Veins of Humor*, ed. by Levin, pp. 57–68 (p. 57).

[33] Bloomfield, 'Gloomy Chaucer', p. 68.

sex; money and professional status; marriage and family; and — in children's jokes and medieval fabliaux anyway — excretion, disease, and death.[34] However, Lawman, as he tells us, was a parish priest. Whatever sexual dilemmas the Second Lateran Council may have created in 1139 by legislating for a celibate clergy, Lawman is not relieving them by telling sexual jokes in fabliau style about dissolute priests: his priests and bishops are exemplary, though he does have an ongoing joke about monks being dirty. Money and the luxury it provides are produced by conquest and are markers of successful leaders like Arthur, not the stuff of comedy. Family and marriage figure rarely because Lawman is not dealing with domestic issues except where they have public and political repercussions: his project is 'history'. History and tragedy have in common the inexorability of fate or divine reprisal: reversals are to be expected. Comedy is essentially unexpected: punchlines and farcical scenes depend on surprise. Death, the universal expectation, is often preceded by disease or maiming, and it forms the very mode of progression in historical narrative. Yet despite Lawman's desire to tell 'þa æðelæn' (*Brut*, line 7, the noble origins) of the ancestors of England's population, disease and death are tinged with humour in Lawman's *Brut*, and sex and marital lapses do indeed play a part.

Although traditionally humorous topics are not given overtly funny treatment in Lawman's *Brut*, the very fact that topics like sex and marriage are universally associated with comedy may have given Lawman's audience a cue to find amusement in the sexual irregularities of Locrin and Uther. Locrin hides his mistress Æstrild in a hole in the ground for seven years (*Brut*, lines 1175–1203), to conceal her from his irate father-in-law, Corineus, who has already knocked the ground from under his feet (literally) by splitting the rock he is standing on with an axe (*Brut*, lines 1135–58). But Æstrild is an alien, and even gives birth in prison: the modern reader, sensitized to gender and ethnic issues, cannot find humour in this debasing episode. Uther is a rather different case. Geoffrey of Monmouth locates the engendering of his great hero, Arthur, in the incongruous context of Uther's rape by deception of Igerna (*Brut*, lines 9490–9514). Lawman's audience would hardly have allowed him to omit this famous episode. His Uther is so infatuated with Gorlois's wife Ygærne that he can't eat, can't sleep, and starts a civil war against her husband. Perhaps surprisingly, Lawman actually plays along with the farce and even expands the dry wit of Wace's Ulfin: Lawman's Ulfin remarks sarcastically in effect 'she's a very unusual woman if she responds to this publicity and aggro, and through sheer terror falls in love with you!':

[34] These, together with blasphemy and ethnic jokes, are discussed by Derek Brewer in the introduction to *Medieval Comic Tales*, ed. by Brewer, pp. xvii–xviii.

> Wenest þu mid swulche hærme: to biȝeten Ygærne.
> þenne heo sculde don: swa ne deð na wif-man.
> mid æie vnimete: halden luue swete. (*Brut*, lines 9352–54).

Lawman covers himself by reassuring his audience, twice, that Ygærne is innocent and has no idea she is not in bed with Gorlois (*Brut*, lines 9505, 9596). Other female characters, however, are not spared the raking light of satire: Iudon, in a grotesque procession of armed women, kills one of her sons by cutting his throat and butchering him because he has killed his brother, whom she preferred (*Brut*, lines 1992–2004). Tonwen reconciles her two sons by dressing bizarrely in rags which expose her knees and breasts (*Brut*, lines 2488–2531).

But the full force of comic buffoonery is seen in Lawman's male figures. Some of his characters are, it seems, set up as joke figures. Uther, as we have seen, both cracks jokes and acts comically. The huge Corineus, that father-in-law Locrin so dreaded, rushes about, grabbing a French archer's bow and wallopping him with it (*Brut*, lines 733–34), muttering to himself as he fights the Poitevins:

> A-wæi Corineus: Nere þu icoren kempa.
> Cuð nu þine strengða: ȝ þine stepa main.
> ȝ þisse Peytisce folc: fal to þe grunde. (*Brut*, lines 771–73)
>
> ['Get away, Corineus, aren't you supposed to be a famous knight?
> Show your strength and your force
> and beat these Poitevins to the ground!']

This he proceeds to do, darting among them like a grey wolf in a flock of sheep (*Brut*, lines 774–75). Wace's Corineus also fights the Poitevins, chiding the Trojans rather than himself (*Roman*, lines 859–900), but there may be a topical joke here for Lawman's audience: in a move to gain political ascendency in 1214, King John forced a marriage between his daughter Joan and Hugh of Lusignan's heir, witnessed at Parthenay by numerous Poitevin barons.[35] Corineus, ancestor of the earls of Cornwall who play a major part in Lawman's *Brut*,[36] is a bluff comic figure who merely disturbs the equilibrium a little. Two Irish kings called Gillomaur are also more undignified blunderers than villains, expecting to win battles by taking *off* their breeches to fight: 'weird were their customs', for example (*Brut*, line 8996).

[35] *Rot. Chart*. i. 197, cited in W. L. Warren, *King John* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961, 1978), p. 221, and see note 23 above. In 1200 John had married Hugh's betrothed, the twelve-year-old Isabelle of Angoulême.

[36] On the earls of Cornwall and their rivalry with those of Kent, see Elizabeth J. Bryan, 'The Afterlife of Armoriche' in *Laȝamon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*, ed. by Allen, Perry, and Roberts, pp. 117–55.

As in Wace's *Roman*, the Saxon Baldulf actually disguises himself as a fool, and is in consequence ridiculed and cuffed, in order to get carried over the wall of York to his besieged brother Colgrim (*Brut*, lines 10127–47). The fool was a cherished member of the noble household, and Bishop Beckington appreciated his jester so much that he had him sculpted on his tomb.[37] Between 6 December (St Nicholas) and 28 December (Holy Innocents) the Church allowed children to impersonate its leaders in the 'boy bishop' role, but authority and high-status figures themselves would not have acted the fool. Bertilak does not lose status when he fools around in the Christmas games and as Derek Brewer observes, 'the prime aim [of the medieval feast] was orderly official festivity'.[38] This is far from the demeaning gesture that Baldulf, brother of the Saxon leader, enacts upon himself. The 'perfect fool for Christ's sake', like St Francis, found a divine vocation in making him/herself a scandal and attracting mockery and ill-treatment from others,[39] and the cuffing Baldulf receives reflects this typical public response to the natural fool and the mentally ill. Because the lunatic and epileptic seemed to lack God-given reason, they were a horror; suspected of diabolic possession, the religious eccentric Margery Kempe was spat at and cursed; other 'unorthodox' people were driven out, beaten, or starved.[40]

Vortigern is a much more sinister character who provides a darkly ironic comedy of treason and self-deception. In the section where Constans is taken from the monastery, crowned, and later murdered, Lawman retains and develops the extended dialogue of Wace's version (*Roman*, lines 6479–6674), highlighting Vortigern's manipulative chicanery. Lawman adds to his source the comic substitution trick by which Vortigern extracts Constans from his monastery disguised as a knight, totally deceiving the dim abbot, who, realizing he has been tricked, gallops after them in furious protest, but Vortigern threatens him with hanging unless he will 'untonsure' the boy (*Brut*, lines 6562–75). Vortigern's disingenuous report of this to the assembled Britons is wrily comic: 'I spoke with the good

[37] Janetta Rebold Benton, *Medieval Mischief: Wit and Humour in the Art of the Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004), pp. 138–40; Beckington died in 1465.

[38] Derek Brewer, 'Feasts', in *A Companion to the Gawain Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 131–42 (p. 138).

[39] See Roland Maisonneuve, 'Margery Kempe and the Eastern and Western Tradition of the "Perfect Fool"', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1982*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies, 1982), pp. 1–17.

[40] Carole Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton, 1995), p. 8.

Abbot, explained the country's crisis and asked him to let the boy become king, and he was sensible and did what I asked':

> ich spæc wið þene abbed· þat is hali mon [ȝ] god.
> ȝ seiden him þa neode· þe icumen is to þissere þeode.
> [...]
> ȝ of Costance þan childe· þe he hæfde ihalden.
> ich bad hine for Gode· don þat child of hade.
> ȝ for swulchere neode· king he scolde beon on þeode.
> ȝ þe abbed nom his ræd. ȝ dude al þat ich hine bed. (*Brut*, lines 6596–97, 6599–6602)

The narrative pace and the oily speech of Vortigern turn this into dramatic comedy. There are additional touches which enhance the audience enjoyment here, such as Vortigern's claim that Britain needs the Picts for support as she is threatened, among others, by the grisly king of Frisia (*Brut*, line 6652) — also probably a topical joke.[41] Or the complaint of the helplessly drunk Picts that they haven't had a single drink and simply must have beer (*Brut*, lines 6776–77). The glib talk and sly actions of devious characters are entertaining; their deeper function is a grim reminder of human insecurity.

This is even more apparent in those 'juvenile' jokes about disease and death in the *Brut*. If death is the last taboo, jokes about it should operate successfully even today as defence mechanisms. Death is common enough in Lawman's chronicle, and since it often actually occurs unexpectedly as far as the participants are concerned, does provide black comedy. If the ability to laugh at oneself is the criterion for having a good sense of humour, we must award Uther full marks for the joke he makes when, chronically sick, he wins a battle from his stretcher:

> ȝ þas word sæide· Vðer þe alde:
> Sexisce men me habbeo[ð]· for hene ihalden.
> mine unhæle me at-witen· mid heore hoker-worden.
> for ich wes here· ilad inne horse-bere.
> ȝ sæiden þat ich wes ded· and mi duȝeðe aswunden.
> And nu is muchel sellic. isiȝen to þissere riche·
> þat nu haueð þeos ded king· þas quiken aqualden. (*Brut*, lines 9775–81)
>
> [These were the words of the aged Uther:
> 'The men of the Saxons deemed me despicable
> Taunted me for my weakness with their scornful words

[41] I have suggested elsewhere that this may be a pun on the name of William de Frise (i.e. Frisia), since 1204 tenant-in-chief of the manor of Martley: Lawman's church of St Bartholomew's, Areley Kings was a chapel of ease to the parish church at Martley (Allen, '*Eorles* and *Beornes*', pp. 15–16).

> Because I was led here on a horse-litter.
> And said I was dead and my doughty strength abated.
> And here now's a great miracle manifest to this realm
> That now this dead king has laid low the living.']

These are brave words from someone terminally ill, and justified by the cruel joke of his Saxon enemy Octa who boasted that he would fetter Uther's arthritic limbs and disable the old cripple (*Brut*, lines 9719–21).[42] Uther thinks he has the last laugh, but this goes to the Saxons after all, when six Saxon knights in disguise as almsmen solicit alms from him and then kill him and his men by poisoning their well (*Brut*, lines 9797–9881). No one can be sure of having the last laugh: this very uncertainty qualifies our sharing of Uther's joke.[43]

Audience enjoyment is carefully inflected throughout the *Brut* by the narrator's deft commentary. Frequently this is overt, reminding listeners for example that the Devil is in charge when Vortigern falls for Hengest's daughter (*Brut*, line 7169). Often there is a more subtly ironic undertone in the form of soubriquets. Vortigern's is *(i)wær*: 'he wes of vfele swiðe iwær' (*Brut*, line 6669, he was most aware of harm),[44] but this changes as Vortigern's fortunes go into reverse, which we have expected ever since he laughed in triumph at his control of Constans (*Brut*, line 6669), and the tables are turned when Hengest, the newly arrived Saxon, plays on him the trick which Vortigern had played on Constans by building on his insecurity (lines 7035, 7217): Hengest now suggests that in his turn Vortigern needs extra troops from abroad, who are of course Hengest's son and the Saxon allies who will defeat Vortigern. 'If he brings ten thousand', cries the duped Vortigern, 'they will all be welcome to me' (*Brut*, line 7235). Vortigern's catch-phrase becomes ironic, as Dorothy Everett remarks, for we are told 'of ælchen vfel he wæs wær'

[42] Lawman's Saxons have appalling taste in humour, boasting that they will make a bridge and a doorstep of Arthur's bones (*Brut*, lines 10475–79).

[43] As Shippey, '"Grim Wordplay"', p. 46, shows, only Ragnar Loðbrók reciting *Krákumál* as he dies in the snake pit can be sure of the last laugh: 'The hours of my life are past: I shall die laughing', but he looks to an afterlife of ale-drinking in the hall of the gods.

[44] The first occurrence of this phrase is a translation of Wace's 'Wortigern fu de grant feintise' (*Roman*, 6579, 'Vortigern, full of deceit'). However, though Wace focuses on Wortigern's deceitfulness, he varies the indictment and does not use a formulaic phrase: 'Fals e fausement parla' (line 6640), 'Semblant ad fait de grant dolur' (line 6661, corresponding to the repeated 'þe swike wes ful deorne', *Brut*, lines 6799, 6805), and concludes in the comment 'Grant poür out, ne sot que dire' (line 7203), where Lawman uses another of his formulas, 'often was Vortigern troubled, but never worse than then' (*Brut*, line 7540). Thus there is no cumulative iteration of Wortigern's deceit in Wace.

(*Brut*, line 6956) when he meets Hengest, and again when Hengest proposes to send for his son (line 7229) and when Vortigern meets the pagan Rouwenne (*Brut*, line 7158).[45] Vortigern's catch-phrase alerts the audience to the theme of plot and counter-plot in this section: his son Vortimer is *un*aware of Rouwenne's plot to poison him ('Ah wale þat Uortimer of hire þonke næs wær', *Brut*, line 7443) and soon enough this familial lapse extends to Vortigern himself: 'her he wes to **vn**-war' (*Brut*, line 7601) in ordering the Britons to go weaponless to the assembly where the Saxons massacre them. Hengest himself switches roles at this very point from being 'cnihten alre fæirest' (*Brut*, line 7030; the handsomest of knights) to 'cnihtene swikelæst' (*Brut*, line 7609; the trickiest). So unaware is Vortigern of 'evil' — of contravening Christian morality, true patriotism, and social propriety — that, having broken faith repeatedly with his own creed, nation, and family, he decides to keep it with his Saxon family, to avoid *scome* ('disgrace', *Brut*, line 7289), a bitter irony.[46]

Vortigern's double punishment, first internal exile and then being burned alive, culminates in Aurelius's sick joke as the wind fans the flames:

> ȝ cleopeden to Vortiger: Nu þu scalt þe warmen þer.
> [...]
> Nu is Aurilie icumen.
> ȝ Vther his broðer: þa þe *balu* sendeð! (*Brut*, lines 8089–92)

[And called out to Vortigern: 'Now you can get warm in there [...] Aurelius and Uther have come now and are bringing you "bale" [death and a funeral pyre].']

Though not so attested in dictionaries, I think this is a pun on *bale* 'disaster, death' (OE *bealo*) and OE *bæl*, 'conflagration, funeral pyre', but both the *MED* and the *OED* claim that ME *bal* 'pyre' is northern, from the Old Norse cognate form, and does not occur before the fourteenth century. The sick joke, like the laugh of triumph, often greets an enemy's death. But O, alas (as Lawman so often says) that young Aurelius did not realize that the joke is also subject to the law of the last

[45] Dorothy Everett, 'La3amon and the Earliest Middle English Alliterative Verse', in *Essays on Middle English Literature*, ed. by Patricia Kean (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 23–45 (pp. 39–40).

[46] The deceit of Vortigern is discussed by Joseph D. Parry, 'Lawman's Vortigern: The Problem of Knowledge and the Problem of Evil', in *La3amon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*, ed. by Allen, Perry, and Roberts, pp. 313–33. For the effect on audience participation of the humorous change of formula (for Caesar, who also becomes *unwar*), see Rosamund Allen, 'The Implied Audience of La3amon's *Brut*', in *The Text and Tradition of Layamon's 'Brut'*, ed. by Françoise le Saux, Arthurian Studies, 33 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 121–39 (p. 133).

laugh: just over seven hundred lines later he is already very sick, and a mere one hundred lines afterwards he himself lies dead of poison.[47]

Arthur also jokes at his defeated enemies. He laughs loudly when Frollo accepts his challenge to single combat (*Brut*, line 11836),[48] but wisely does not laugh in triumph when Frollo dies, though the British laugh in relief as they had been expecting Arthur to die (*Brut*, line 11970). Arthur laughs when he defeats Colgrim and Baldulf (*Brut*, line 10692), however, mocks them for climbing too high, and sends them down to hell to greet Hengest and his kin (*Brut*, lines 10694–704). He also ridicules his enemies as hunted animals in the famous extended similes: Childric is like a desperate fox (*Brut*, lines 10398–413), the Saxons are 'heðene hundes' (*Brut*, line 10565), and Colgrim is like a goat attacked by a wolf (*Brut*, lines 10628–36). Yet Arthur survives these jests, until his moment of hubris after his defeat of the Emperor. This prompts from him a joke, more laboured than in Wace, that he is sending the Emperor's corpse as the tribute demanded of him by Rome and will bring his own greeting soon (*Brut*, lines 13912–22). The vaunting is in vain, warns the narrator: Modred sees to that (*Brut*, lines 13923–25).

Arthur's is the focal narrative of the text: for twelve years after establishing his rule in Britain and the north, and for nine years after conquering France, Arthur maintains peace and prosperity, and his followers flourish. Long chronicles have overriding themes (Barbour's *Bruce* celebrates freedom and faith, as Robert Albano shows).[49] Lawman's themes are peace (*Brut*, line 12355) and loyalty: fidelity to liege lord and heavenly Lord. Minor disruption of the peace, like Corineus's, constructs a comic character, but Vortigern transgresses all the laws of a Christian society: he kills a king, breaks a monastic vow, takes on the archbishop's role by crowning a king, and marries a pagan, and his depravity earns him the most extended black comedic narrative of the text. By contrast, Arthur does not lose his status, but retains his title *æðelest alre kinge* ('noblest of all kings') until the moment he learns of Modred's treachery (*Brut*, line 14035). He remains the 'most gracious' of kings (*Brut*, line 14060), 'most powerful' (*Brut*, line 14143), even when angriest (*Brut*, line 14225), and urges as he dies that his laws and those of his predecessors be kept. Arthur represents stability. His integrity is apparent in the lack of any

[47] 'Often, indeed usually, *the laugh is on those who laugh*' (Shippey, '"Grim Wordplay"', p. 37; Shippey's italics).

[48] Signalling that he is 'someone to be reckoned with', like Byrhtnoth at Maldon (Niles, 'Byrhtnoth's Laughter', p. 24).

[49] Robert A. Albano, *Middle English Historiography*, American University Studies, 168 (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 160–74.

irony marking a distinction between the private man and his public role. Even his dreams, of the fighting dragon and bear and the collapse of his hall, are of political import and are interpreted in open audience (*Brut*, lines 12788–94, 14041–59).

By this stage in the text, the reader/listener has been frequently reminded that characters' motives are invisible to other characters, though we have been privy to the inner workings of their minds. For example, we knew Vortigern's thoughts though the Picts did not ('nusten noht þas cnihtes· wæt þe swike þohte', *Brut*, line 6740; these knights did not know what the traitor was thinking), and we know he is being devious as he urges revenge for Constans's death ('mid his lechen he gon liȝen. his heorte wes ful bliðe [...] þe swike wes ful deorne', *Brut*, lines 6838–39; with his gestures he was lying for his heart was rejoicing [...] the traitor was most crafty). Lawman's use of ironic situations and humorous phraseology, his presentation of villains and idiosyncratic characters in a comic light, enable the reader to master the technique of standing aside from the plot and assuming a 'God's eye' view of the events of history.

The revenges brought in by the whirligig of time are not always condign punishment: the just also perish, often miserably. Yet there is creative delight in the very alternation of comedy and disaster in Lawman's *Brut*. This journey through British history leaves the reader deeply aware that the brevity of human endeavour, whether famous or infamous, is ultimately for the best. Nor does it lie beyond recall: Arthur's achievements are undone, his promise of return (*Brut*, line 14281) remains unfulfilled, but the songs he inspired — 'scopes þer sungen· of Arðure þan kingen' (*Brut*, line 11330; minstrels sang there about King Arthur) — are reconstituted in Lawman's narrative: 'Her mon mai arede of Arðure þan king' (*Brut*, line 11337).[50] These long-lost human lives are perpetuated in Lawman's own *loft-songe* (*Brut*, line 36), and the tragi-comic vision is then re-created in the reader's own mind's eye.

We may not always be certain we have correctly located Lawman's comedy, but he surely has a sense of humour, which isolates lack of Christian principle by exaggeration and disproportion. We relish disorder in comedy, which could have

[50] Critics read entirely seriously Lawman's two 'Eucharistic' references to scops 'feeding' from his breast and drinking his blood (*Brut*, lines 9411–12) and eating at the table of Arthur's breast, drawing draughts of wine from his tongue, and drinking and singing all day and night (*Brut*, lines 11494–98) — both presumably meaning that poets are fed by patrons for telling tales of his valour (breast) and his words (tongue). Both passages are attributed to Merlin, and perhaps it is not impossible that this is a rather obscure clerical joke, written as it may have been around the time of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) which made annual communion mandatory.

troubled Lawman's sense of religious decorum, while his outspoken religious outrage often shocks our inculcated political correctness. But at least there can be no doubt about the variety of tone in Lawman's narrative. The lighter passages — even if we do not find all of them funny, they are less disturbing than some — instruct by entertaining and so develop in the audience an intelligent awareness of action and motive in past time. This information readers and listeners will carry forward into a future they are in turn helping to mould. Entertainment becomes instruction. The final line of Lawman's *Brut*: 'i-wurðe þet iwurðe: i-wurðe Godes wille' (line 16095; let come what must come, let God's will be done), is a comic view. God's ways are best and Lawman has allowed us at least a share in what is ultimately the comedy of human history.

A Small History of Laughter, or When Laughter has to Be Reasonable

Stefan Bießenecker

In Umberto Eco's novel *Il nome della rosa*, William of Baskerville, while investigating a series of mysterious deaths at an abbey, discovers in its library the existence of the only remaining copy of Aristotle's *Second Book of Poetics* on Comedy. The Venerable Jorge, the most ancient denizen of the abbey, has poisoned the pages so that anyone who turns them will die and thus be unable to spread the book's dangerous ideas. The traditionalist Jorge asserts that jocularity is a blasphemous sin and starts a fire which destroys the library along with the *Second Book of Poetics*. Two contrasting positions meet in Eco's novel: the medieval, educated monk represented by the conservative Jorge of Burgos and the progressive man of science William of Baskerville who anticipates the Renaissance.[1] They stand for two different attitudes towards laughter which competed during the Middle Ages: on the one hand, the deliberations of classical philosophers and, on the other, the writings of the Church Fathers and biblical exegesis.[2] Both strands nourished courtly attitudes towards laughter and, with the progression of the Middle Ages, the cloisters as institutions of ideologies were gradually replaced by the noble courts, which developed their own ideals of proper emotionality.[3]

[1] Gerhard Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht … Überlegungen zu einer mittelalterlichen Verhaltensnorm', in *Vom Lachen: Einem Phänomen auf der Spur*, ed. by Thomas Vogel (Tübingen: Attempo, 1992), pp. 129–53 (pp. 141–45). Gustav Seibt, 'Der Einspruch des Körpers: Philosophien des Lachens von Platon bis Plessner – und zurück', *Merkur*, 56 (2002), 751–62 (p. 755).

[2] See Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[3] Cf. Robert Garland, 'Post Risus – Notes on the Symposia of Laughter down the Centuries in 1993, 1994 and 1996: Suggestions following the First Conference on the Phenomenon of

As an object of research, emotions are foreign to the historian. For a long time, no corresponding entry, not even, for example, the keyword 'feeling', could be found in dictionaries or encyclopaedias of medieval history. Yet sources from the Middle Ages supply ample evidence for often exaggerated emotions.[4] When talking about emotionality, we must distinguish between the expression of feelings in individuals and general concepts of emotions, between reality external to the text and its reflection in the text, between actual and performed emotions.[5] The nature of the sources means that we only have evidence for public displays of emotionality available to us.[6]

Laughter is of special interest as a physical display of emotion. Laughter as a bodily reaction may be spontaneous or willed, but once begun it becomes difficult to control and progresses automatically through the body from clonic spasms of the diaphragm, short, intense breaths increasing to dyspnoea and spontaneous contractions of the muscular system of the face. At the same time other muscles, especially in the shoulders, relax and so become involved in the bodily tremor. The whole body becomes a resonating chamber of the voice. The lower jaw trembles and the head is thrown back with heavy laughter; the upper part of the body

Laughter', in *Laughter Down the Centuries*, ed. by Siegfried Jäkel and Asko Timonen, 3 vols (Turku: Turku Yliopisto, 1994–97), III (1997), 265–75; Stefanie Hüttinger, *Die Kunst des Lachens – das Lachen der Kunst: Ein Stottern des Körpers*, European University Studies, Theatre, Film and Television, 30 (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 73–104. Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', pp. 129–30. See also Rudolf Helmstetter, 'Vom Lachen der Tiere, der Kinder, der Götter, der Menschen und der Engel', *Merkur*, 56 (2002), 763–73 (pp. 766–68).

[4] Gerd Althoff, 'Empörung, Tränen, Zerknirschung', in *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Friede und Fehde*, ed. by Gerd Althoff (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), pp. 258–81 (pp. 258–59). For a general introduction, see also Barbara Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), 821–45.

[5] Matthias Becher, '"Cum lacrimis et gemitu": Vom Weinen der Sieger und der Besiegten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter', in *Formen und Funktionen: öffentlicher Kommunikation im Mittelalter*, ed. by Gerd Althoff, Vorträge und Forschungen, 51 (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001), pp. 25–52 (pp. 27, 40–41). Dietmar Rieger, '"E trait sos meillors omes ab un consel": Emotionen, Inszenierung und feudales "consilium" im "Girart de Roussillon"', in ibid., pp. 227–46 (p. 230). For discussion of the problems of scientific research in emotions, see Karl-Joseph Kuschel, 'Über die destruktive und befreiende Kraft des Lachens: Anthropologische und theologische Aspekte', *Concilium*, 36 (2000), 472–79. Richard Müller-Freienfels addresses humour and jokes especially: *Das Lachen und das Lächeln: Komik und Humor als wissenschaftliche Probleme* (Bonn: Leuchtturm, 1948).

[6] Cf. Gerd Althoff, 'Gefühle in der öffentlichen Kommunikation des Mittelalters', in *Emotionalität: Zur Geschichte der Gefühle*, ed. by Claudia Benthien, Anne Fleig, and Ingrid Kasten (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), pp. 82–89 (p. 82).

stretches and bends backwards a little, until exhaustion and pain in the diaphragm and the muscles of the stomach cause the body to bend forwards. The whole artery system is extended, so that the face and neck blush.[7]

But the trigger for laughter is not constant. Sense of humour varies in time and place, from one society to another.[8] Sense of humour as a condition of production and reception is subject to historical differences. Jokes, for example, have laughter as an aim: without laughter jokes do not meet their purpose. The success of a joke depends on several different aspects: culture, situation, audience, composition, etc. They are defined by the re-action of the audience, the (return-)laughter of the addressee(s).[9] We can, however, determine some of the historical nuances by examining situations in which laughter is provoked.

Yet the picture cannot be complete, as the texts were produced in a religious or noble milieu; so, for example, humour among the lower classes of medieval society is eclipsed.[10] Moreover, in courtly society the showing of emotions was regulated by the principle of moderation, *mâze*. While *mâze* as a principle belongs to courtly literature, its paradigms are found in a wide range of texts (religious, historiographical, philosophical, and literary).[11] Social and clerical conventions required

[7] Gerhard Marcel Martin, 'Zur Idee einer Theologie des Lachens', *Una Sancta*, 52 (1997), 266–74 (p. 267).

[8] See, for a survey of the research, Johan Verberckmoes, 'What about Medieval Humour? Some Historiography', in *Risus mediaevalis: Laughter in Medieval Literature and Art*, ed. by Herman Braet, Guido Latré, and Werner Verbeke (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), pp. 1–9. See also, for example, Sieglinde Hartmann, 'Ein empirischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des Lachens im Mittelalter: Lachen beim Stricker', *Mediaevistik*, 3 (1990), 107–29 (p. 107). For discussion of medieval humour, see John S. P. Tatlock, 'Mediaeval Laughter', *Speculum*, 21 (1946), 289–94; Helen Adolf, 'On Medieval Laughter', *Speculum*, 22 (1947), 251–53. On the problems of terminology and the translation of modern concepts of 'humour' and 'joke' to the Middle Ages, see Martin Schubert, *Zur Theorie des Gebarens im Mittelalter: Analyse von nichtsprachlichen Äußerungen in mittelhochdeutscher Epik, Rolandslied, Eneasroman, Tristan*, Kölner Germanistische Studien, 31 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991), p. 91. See also Rosamund Allen in this volume.

[9] For an explanation of how jokes work, see Karl Fallend, *Witz und Psychoanalyse: Internationale Sichtweisen – Sigmund Freud Revisited* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2006).

[10] Lauri Lindgren, 'Ein Beispiel des volkstümlichen Humors im Mittelalter: Der Priester im altfranzösischen Fabliaux', in *Laughter Down the Centuries*, ed. by Jäkel and Timonen, II (1995), 185–91.

[11] Rieger, '"E trait sos meillors"', pp. 227–28. Cf. Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur, Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, 7th edn (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1994), pp. 22–25. Becher, '"Cum lacrimis et gemitu"', p. 29. Cf. *Sprachspiel und Lachkultur, Beiträge zur Literatur- und Sprachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Bräuer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Angela Bader,

constraint of one's feelings.[12] One image of the Last Judgement illustrates both the moderate and immoderate in an emotional response.

The Laughter of the Damned

The Princes' Portal of the Cathedral of Bamberg carries in its tympanum a famous relief of the Last Judgement (Figure 26). The blessed are to the right of Christ in his Majesty, the damned to his left, all drawn from different classes of society. This familiar tableau is surprising in its detail, however, for the damned are laughing. It was once thought that their faces were disfigured by crying and that the masters of Reims were not able to represent negative emotions as well as they could positive ones. Yet positive emotion is sculpted so masterfully that it is hard to believe the artists could not have crafted other facial expressions with equal success.[13] All the blessed are smiling. An inner joy seems to be chiselled into their faces as they

Irene Erfen, and Ulrich Müller, Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 300 (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Heinz, 1994). Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). Jan-Dirk Müller, 'Lachen – Spiel – Fiktion, Zum Verhältnis von literarischem Diskurs und historischer Realität im "Frauendienst" Ulrichs von Lichtenstein', in *Minnesang und Literaturtheorie*, ed. by Ute von Bloh (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 1–38. Ulrich Müller, 'Zur Lachkultur in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Neidhart und Neithart Fuchs', in *Laughter Down the Centuries*, ed. by Jäkel and Timonen, I (1994), 161–81.

[12] Gerd Althoff, 'Demonstration und Inszenierung: Spielregeln der Kommunikation in mittelalterlicher Öffentlichkeit', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 27 (1993), 27–50 (p. 31). Matthew Innes, '"He never even allowed his white teeth to be bared in laughter": The Politics of Humour in the Carolingian Renaissance', in *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Guy Halsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 131–56.

[13] Willibald Sauerländer, 'Vom Gelächter des Teufels zur Ironie der Philosophen – Über das Lachen im Spiegel der Bilder', *Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste: Jahrbuch*, 13 (1999), 30–79. Achim Hubel, 'Die jüngere Bildhauerwerkstatt des Bamberger Doms, Überlegungen zur Erzählform und zur Deutung der Skulpturen', in *Architektur und Monumentalskulptur des 12.–14. Jahrhunderts: Produktion und Rezeption / Architecture et sculpture monumentale du 12e au 14e siècle: Production et reception. Festschrift für Peter Kurmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Stephan Gasser, Christian Freigang, and Bruno Boerner (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 475–528. Manfred Schuller, *Das Fürstenportal des Bamberger Domes* (Bamberg: Diözesanmuseum, 1993), pp. 27–28. Bernhard Staude, *Lachen am Bamberger Dom* (Forchheim: self-published, 1977). Robert Suckale, 'Die Bamberger Domskulpturen: Technik, Blockbehandlung, Ansichtigkeit und die Einbeziehung des Betrachters', *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 3rd ser., 38 (1987), 27–82. Christoph Türcke, 'Götter lachen, Gott nicht', *Merkur*, 56 (2002), 774–78 (p. 778). See also Heike Ostarhild, *Wenn Meisterwerke Zähne zeigen: Über das Lachen in der Kunst* (Tübingen: Legat, 2002).

prepare to enter into paradise. They are pious, moderate, and dignified (Figure 27). The faces of the damned are distorted by wild laughter. They seem confused, perhaps not understanding what lies ahead of them. They show their teeth while the devil in the right corner sticks out his tongue at the spectator. With expressions that are vulgar, exaggerated, and lively, they laugh as if crazy, unreasonably (Figure 28). These are not faces contorted with grief.

In the Cloister There Is Nothing to Laugh About

'Laughter' is the term for a wide range of responses from smiling to the vocalic and bodily expression described above. So too, its antithesis 'crying' may include 'tears', 'sobs', and the 'sad countenance'.[14] These two emotional responses would often be opposed in writings. Many of the source texts are fundamentally didactic which inevitably skews the representation of emotions. They typically draw a frightening picture of sinfulness against the background of an ideal. A disapproval of laughter and jokes manifested itself in religious communities.[15] One aged monk stated, 'Flere debemus semper' (we ought always to weep).[16] Monks were to insulate themselves from the outside world in order to live and experience the kingdom of God on earth. While they were to follow Jesus's example of not laughing,[17] the Church never banned laughing, though individual monastic rules did:[18]

[14] Helmuth Plessner, *Lachen und Weinen: Eine Untersuchung nach den Grenzen menschlichen Verhaltens*, 3rd edn (Bern: Lehnen, 1961). Günther Blaicher, 'Das Weinen in mittelenglischer Zeit, Studien zur Gebärde des Weinens in historischen Quellen und literarischen Texten' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Saarbrücken, 1966). For laughter, see Günther Blaicher, 'Über das Lachen im englischen Mittelalter', *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 44 (1970), 508–29.

[15] Gisbert Kranz, *Das göttliche Lachen* (Würzburg: Echter, 1970), pp. 57–58. Urban Küsters, 'Freude, Leid und Glück: Mittelalter', in *Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte: Hauptthemen in Einzeldarstellungen*, ed. by Peter Dinzelbacher (Stuttgart: Alfred Körner, 1993), pp. 307–17. Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Lachen: Gottes und der Menschen Kunst* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Attempo, 1994), p. 83.

[16] Anonymous, *Verba Seniorum [Interpete Pelagio Diacono]*, *PL*, 73 (1849), cols 855–988 (col. 864B).

[17] Werner Thiede, *Das verheißene Lachen: Humor in theologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), p. 117.

[18] Hartmann, 'Ein empirischer Beitrag', p. 108. Kuschel, 'Über die destruktive und befreiende Kraft des Lachens', p. 473. Irven Resnick, '"Risus monasticus": Laughter and Medieval Monastic Culture', *Revue bénédictine*, 97 (1987), 90–100.

Figure 26. 'The Last Judgement', tympanum of the Prince's Portal, Bamberg Cathedral (Bamberger Dom St Peter und St Georg), Germany, *c.* 1235.

Figure 27 (left). 'The Last Judgement' (detail), the blessed on the left.

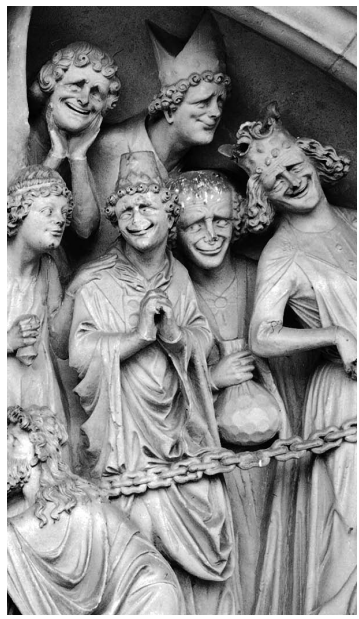


Figure 28 (right). 'The Last Judgement' (detail), the damned on the right.

All photographs courtesy of the Stadtarchiv Bamberg, D 1046 + 42872.

> Scurrilitates vero vel verba otiosa et risum moventia aeterna clusura in omnibus locis damnamus et ad talia eloquia discipulum aperire os non permittimus. (*Regula Sancti Benedicti*, VI, 'De tacitu[r]nitate', 8)[19]
>
> [We absolutely condemn in all places any vulgarity and gossip and talk leading to laughter, and we do not permit a disciple to engage in words of that kind.][20]

The *Regula Sancti Benedicti*, clearly states that joking and laughing are undesirable:[21]

> verba vana aut risui apta non loqui, risum multum aut excussum non amare. (*Regula Sancti Benedicti*, IV, 'Quae sunt instrumenta bonorum operum', 53–54)[22]
>
> [and speak no foolish chatter, nothing just to provoke laughter; do not love immoderate or boisterous laughter.][23]
>
> Decimum humilitatis gradus est, si non sit facilis ac promptus in risu, quia scriptum est: *Stultus in risu exaltat vocem suam*. (*Regula Sancti Benedicti*, VII, 'De humilitate', 59)[24]
>
> [The tenth step of humility is that he is not given to ready laughter, for it is written: Only a fool raises his voice in laughter.][25]

While the Rule of St Benedict takes a strict stance, it is generally representative of monastic restrictions of laughter and anything that might cause laughter.

Additional sources for monastic life indicate two types of laughter can be distinguished. Both are to be rejected for their sinful character, though they differ

[19] *Regula Sancti Benedicti*, Bibliotheca Benedictina IntraText, II IntraText Edition CT, © Èulogos 2007; source of the electronic transcription <http://www.freeweb.org/religioni/Cistercensi/>, <http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0011/_P7.HTM> [accessed 5 June 2009]. See also *Sancti Benedicti Regula monasteriorum*, ed. by Cuthbert Butler (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1927).

[20] *The Rule of St Benedict*, with commentary by Phillip Lawrence, OSB <http://christdesert.org/Detailed/74.html> [accessed 5 June 2009].

[21] See Pedro Max Alexander, 'La Prohibición de la risa en la Regula Benedicti: Intento de explicaión e interpretation', *Regula Benedicti Studia*, 5 (1976), 225–83. See also the commentaries to the *Regula Sancti Benedicti*; for example, Smaragdus, *Commentaria in Regulam Sancti Benedicti*, *PL*, 103 (1851), cols 689A–932C (cap. 7, col. 825B); Hugh of St Victor, *In Salomonis Ecclesiasten Homiliae XIX*, *PL*, 175 (1854), cols 113–256C (Homily 8, col. 165A).

[22] <http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0011/_P5.HTM> [accessed 5 June 2009].

[23] <http://christdesert.org/Detailed/71.html> [accessed 5 June 2009].

[24] <http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0011/_P8.HTM> [accessed 5 June 2009].

[25] <http://christdesert.org/Detailed/75.html> [accessed 5 June 2009].

in their degree of sinfulness.[26] Laughter, or rather smiling, as expressive of inner, spiritual joy is not necessarily condemned.[27] Indeed, such expression of joy might be prompted by meditation upon the beauty of God's creation.[28] Yet the joyful person should rather weep for his sins in anticipation of the Last Judgement. It was believed too that crying would bring one closer to God.[29] In the *Formula honestae vitae*, pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux demonstrates the idea that through a sad demeanour the face on the contrary reveals joy: 'Tristitiam autem, maxime in conventu, dissimulare te decet, quandam in facie hilaritatem praetendens' (but sadness, especially in the cloister, suits you well, by that way your face shows a kind of joy).[30] Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), who sent his disciples to travel the land as carriers of joy, is never presented as laughing but often as crying, condemning idleness and craziness:[31]

> He used to say: '[...] It is the fate of the devil and his minions to be sad, and it is our lot to *rejoice always* and *be glad in the Lord*.' [...] It should not be understood or believed, however, that our father [Francis of Assisi], a lover of total maturity and integrity, would

[26] Anonymous, *Liber de modo bene vivendi ad sororum*, *PL*, 184 (1854), cols 1199–1306D (cols 1294–95). Cf. Gerhard Schmitz, '"quod rident homines, florandum est": Der "Unwert" des Lachens in monastisch geprägten Vorstellungen der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters', in *Stadtverfassung – Verfassungsstaat – Pressepolitik: Festschrift für Eberhard Naujoks zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Franz Quarthal and Wilfried Setzler (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1980), pp. 3–15 (pp. 7–9). See also 'Regula Coenobialis', in *Medieval Handbook of Penance*, trans. by John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 260. This division can also be found in scholasticism: Jacques Le Goff, 'Lachen im Mittelalter', in *Kulturgeschichte des Humors: Von der Antike bis heute*, ed. by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, trans. by Kai Broderson (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999), pp. 43–56 (p. 47).

[27] Cf. Proverbs 15. 13: 'Or gaudens exhilarat faciem: in moerore animi dejicitur spiritus' ('A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by grief of mind the spirit is cast down'). *Biblia sacra Vulgatae editionis*, ed. by Augustin Arndt, 6th edn, 3 vols (Regensburg: Pustet, 1914). Translation here and in the following from Douay Bible <http://www.drbo.org> [accessed July 2007]. See also Resnick, '"Risus monasticus"', pp. 95–96; Schubert, *Zur Theorie des Gebarens im Mittelalter*, p. 123.

[28] Joachim Suchomski, *'Delectatio' und 'utilitas': Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis mittelalterlicher komischer Literatur*, Bibliotheca Germanica, 18 (Bern: Francke, 1975), pp. 14 and 16. Walo Hartmann, *Über das Lachen: Zur anthropologischen Bedeutung des Lachenkönnens und der Sinn des Lachens* (Schaffhausen: Meier, 1998), pp. 195–96.

[29] Christoph Benke, *Die Gabe der Tränen: Zur Tradition und Theologie eines vergessenen Kapitels der Glaubensgeschichte* (Würzburg: Echter, 2002), pp. 151–53 and 187.

[30] Bernard of Clairvaux [uncertain], *Formula honestae vitae*, *PL*, 184 (1854), cols 1167–72A (col. 1169C). All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[31] Kranz, *Das göttliche Lachen*, p. 54.

> have wanted this joy to be shown through laughter or even empty words, when, through this, it is not spiritual joy that is shown but vanity and foolishness. In fact, he abhorred laughter and an idle word to an exceptional degree in a servant of God, since he not only wanted him not to laugh, but not even to give the slightest occasion for others to laugh. [...] Blessed is that religious who has no pleasure and delight except in the most holy words and deeds of the Lord and, with these, leads people to God with gladness and joy. Woe to that religious who delights in idle and empty words and leads people to laughter with them.[32]

Resounding laughter, lively joy, or yet worse, laughter about another's accident or mishap are condemned.[33] Such loud, open-mouthed laughter distorts the face of a monk, as well as contradicting the monastic rule of silence.[34] Gaufried of Auxerre describes the dismay of Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) on hearing laughter from monks. To laugh, Bernard would report, would cause him more suffering than to supress laughter. He had not laughed, he said, since joining the monastic life.[35] Yet we know from a genre of monastic, jocular, and parodic texts, *joca monacorum*, which were written down from the eighth century onwards, that humour was part of monastic life.[36]

[32] 'The Beginning of *A Mirror of Perfection* of the *Status* of a Lesser Brother (The Sabatier Edition)', in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, 3 vols (New York: New City Press, 1999–2001), III: *The Prophet* (2001), pp. 253–372 (chap. 7, pp. 342–43). Cf. *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli sociorum S. Francisci*, ed. by Rosalind B. Brook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[33] In Der Stricker no laughing can be found. He just rejects malicious laughter. *Die Kleindichtung des Strickers*, ed. by Wolfgang Moelleken, Gayle Agler-Beck, and Robert E. Lewis, 5 vols, GAG, 107 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1973–78). Hartmann, 'Ein empirischer Beitrag', p. 120.

[34] Le Goff, 'Lachen im Mittelalter', p. 56. The Benedictine abbess Hildegard of Bingen describes loud laughter as a consequence of the Fall of Man: 'In that way the voice of higher joy, which Adam had possessed before, was transformed into the opposite way of laughter and snigger. Such indecorous gayness and this laughter have a certain relationship with the fleshly lust [...]. The same lust excites the laughter and shakes the loins. In raw hee-haw the beautiful music of human voice grows similar with the voice of livestock.' Quoted by Kranz, *Das göttliche Lachen*, p. 53. Cf. Hildegard von Bingen, *Das Geheimnis der Liebe: Bilder von des Menschen leibhaftiger Not und Seeligkeit*, trans. by Heinrich Schipperges (Olten: Walter, 1957).

[35] *Das Leben des heiligen Bernhard von Clairvaux: Vita prima*, ed. by Paul Sinz (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1962), pp. 165–66.

[36] Kranz, *Das göttliche Lachen*, p. 53. See also Resnick, '"Risus monasticus"', p. 100; Walter Haug, 'Das Komische und das Heilige: Zur Komik in der religiösen Literatur des Mittelalters', *Wolfram-Studien*, 7 (1982), 8–31. For the necessity of laughter, see Albert Zimmermann, 'Gedanken des Thomas von Aquin über Spiel und Scherz', in *Geist und Zeit: Wirkungen des Mittelalters in Literatur und Sprache: Festschrift für Roswitha Wisniewski zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag*,

Visitors might also bring humour to the monastaries. The anecdotal history of the Abbey of St Gall written by Ekkehard IV of St Gall (d. after 1056) recalls an occasion when the subdean was the butt of a joke on the occasion of a visit to the abbey by King Otto (d. 983) together with Duke Otto. As they stood next to one another they observed the dignified subdean Rupert passing them with measured step. Duke Otto made a joke and whispered into the King's ear: 'Numquam [...] leporem ille curriculo capiet' (He would never be able to catch the hare by running). Rupert who heard this bowed. King Otto, not without malicious joy, said to the Duke: 'Vae tibi misero! [...] ipse enim audivit' (Pay attention, you wretch [...] he heard that).[37] Rupert here fully and completely met the monastic obligation of humility, yet he demonstrated to the two Ottos that he had heard their joke and was aware of their sinful behaviour. During a royal inspection of the same abbey in 966, at the banquet with the royal delegates some of the guests played jokes on the monks. Finally the visitors broke out in great laughter, but the monks of St Gall remained serious. The delegation, in admiration of the exemplary behaviour of the monks, threw themselves on the ground and asked for pardon.[38]

A good monastic's contempt for the body and its expressions would include a contempt of laughter and a praise for crying. The origins for monastic *Tränenkultur*, the exhortation to weep, can be traced to the the writings of Jerome, who states that while we are in this vale of tears, we must cry not laugh, and those that weep are blessed.[39]

Augustine also is clear on the human ability to laugh: 'et rident homines, et plorant homines: et quod rident homines, plorandum est' (Man is laughing and man is crying. What man is laughing about is enough to make you weep).[40] Yet no

ed. by Carola L. Gottzmann (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 200–09 (p. 206). For *joca monacorum*, see Jerry Palmer, *Taking Humour Seriously* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 44. Also Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 85.

[37] Ekkehard IV of St Gall, *Casus Sancti Galli*, ed. by Hans Haefele, 4th edn, Freiherr von Stein Gedächtnisausgabe, 10 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), cap. 128.

[38] Ekkehard IV of St Gall, *Casus Sancti Galli*, cap. 110–11.

[39] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, p. 79. Jerome, 'Tractatus de Psalmo LXXXIII', in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera*, II: *Opera Homiletica*, ed. by D. Germanus Morin, Corpus christianorum, series latina, 78 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958).

[40] Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermones ad Populum: Classis I de Scripturis*, *PL*, 38 (1845), cols 23–994 (col. 194).

doctrine of laughter has been established, while a doctrine of tears was developed by John Chrysostom.[41] It is his writings which lie behind the contempt for laughter and the praise of tears:

> If thou also weep thus, thou art become a follower of thy Lord. Yea, for He also wept, both over Lazarus, and over the city; and touching Judas He was greatly troubled. And this indeed one may often see Him do, but nowhere laugh, nay, nor smile but a little; no one at least of the evangelists hath mentioned this. [...] And these things I say, not to suppress all laughter, but to take away dissipation of mind. For wherefore, I pray thee, art thou luxurious and dissolute, while thou art still liable to such heavy charges, and are to stand at a fearful judgment-seat, and to give a strict account of all that hath been done here? Yes: for we are to give an account both of what we have sinned willingly, and what against our will.

According to John Chrysostom, the only key to heaven is to weep in anticipation of the Last Judgement: by shedding tears a man demonstrates his regret for his sins. Laughter means the oblivion of sins.[42]

> The things then being so great, for which thou art to give account, dost thou sit laughing and talking wittily, and giving thyself up to luxury? 'Why,' one may say, 'if I did not so, but mourned, what would be the profit?' Very great indeed; even so great, as it is not possible so much as to set it forth by word. For while, before the temporal tribunals, be thy weeping ever so abundant, thou canst not escape punishment after the sentence; here, on the contrary, shouldest thou only sigh, thou hast annulled the sentence, and hast obtained pardon. Therefore it is that Christ discourses to us much of mourning, and blesses them that mourn, and pronounces them that laugh wretched. For this is not the theatre for laughter, neither did we come together for this intent, that we may give way to immoderate mirth, but that we may groan, and by this groaning inherit a kingdom.[43]

We encounter the same attitude to laughter and tears as in the *Regula Sancti Benedicti*, that an exemplary and God-fearing Christian would constantly weep for his sins. But John Chrysostom does not completely condemn laughter but rather

[41] On the contrary a doctrine of laughter does not exist (Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', p. 130) and attempts to establish one have been unsuccessful (see Martin, 'Zur Idee einer Theologie des Lachens').

[42] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, p. 83.

[43] [John Chrysostom], 'Homily 6' [Matthew 2. 1–2], in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. by Philip Schaff, vol. X: *St Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, trans. by George Prevost, rev. with notes by M. B. Riddle (Edinburgh: Clark; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, [1888?]); <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf110.iii.VI_1.html> [accessed 24 June 2009].

unbridled merriment. Yet the idea that there could not be real joy on earth was commonplace, expounded too by Gregory the Great and Caesarius of Arles.[44]

God Laughs, His Son Cries: Laughter in the Bible

The most famous example of laughing in the Bible is in the story of Abraham and Sara, who in their great age cannot believe God's announcement that they will conceive a child. Sara's response is to laugh, and her laughter is a sign of doubt (Genesis 18. 12–15). Abraham falls to the ground before God and laughs, full of disbelief (Genesis 17. 17). They may laugh without impunity as Isaac, their son, can be seen as the gift of a laughing God to a doubting mankind, as the name 'Isaac' means 'may God laugh'.[45]

The appearance of laughter in the Old Testament falls into two categories, God's laughing at sceptics and sinners, and sinners deriding the faithful.[46] The God of Psalm 2 punishes in anger and does not tolerate resistance.[47] His inviolable power lets him laugh mockingly at the helplessness of sinners.[48] Whoever mocks God cannot expect any mercy.[49] God takes revenge on sinners and laughs at

[44] For Gregory the Great, see Alanus de Insulis, *Summa de arte praedictatoria*, *PL*, 210 (1855), cols 109–98A. Caesarius Arelatensis, *Sermones*, ed. by D. Germanus Morin, Corpus christianorum, series latina, 104 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953), 'Sermo 215'.

[45] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, pp. 88–89. See also Kuschel, 'Über die destruktive und befreiende Kraft des Lachens', p. 473; Martin, 'Zur Idee einer Theologie des Lachens', p. 269. Genesis 21. 6: 'Dixitque Sara: "Risum fecit mihi Deus; quicumque audierit, corridebit mihi"' ('And Sara said: God hath made a laughter for me: whosoever shall hear of it will laugh with me').

[46] Thiede counts about twenty occasions of 'laughter' in the Bible (*Das verheißene Lachen*, p. 34). On the contrary, W. Hartmann, *Über das Lachen*, (p. 194) encounters *ridere* only twice in the Old Testament: Job 9. 23 and Proverbs 1. 26. He identifies a laughing God five times, and notes the occurence of the words *irridere* (Psalms 2. 4, 36. 13) and *deridere* (Psalm 58. 9).

[47] Psalm 2. 2–4: 'Astiterunt reges terrae, et principes convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum et adversus christum eius: "Dirumpamus vincula eorum et proiciamus a nobis iugum ipsorum!" Qui habitat in caelis, irridebit eos, Dominus subsannabit eos' ('The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against his Christ. Let us break their bonds asunder: and let us cast away their yoke from us. He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them').

[48] Jeremias 20. 7; II Kings 2. 23.

[49] Psalm 1. 1, 4–6: 'Beatus vir, qui non abiit in consilio impiorum et in via peccatorum non stetit et in conventu derisorum non sedit. [...] Non sic impii, non sic, sed tamquam pulvis, quem

them.[50] The threatening and avenging God of the Old Testament laughs only when those who have risen against him lie on the ground defeated.[51] In the Book of Job it is written that he who suffers, who is beaten and tested by God, will one day laugh.[52] Laughter is the comfort promised after the vale of tears on earth.[53] A mysterious side of divine laughter is described in the same book when God mocks

proicit ventus. Ideo non consurgent impii in iudicio, neque peccatores in concilio iustorum. Quoniam novit Dominus viam iustorum, et iter impiorum peribit' ('Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence [...]. Not so the wicked, not so: but like the dust, which the wind driveth from the face of the earth. Therefore the wicked shall not rise again in judgment: nor sinners in the council of the just. For the Lord knoweth the way of the just: and the way of the wicked shall perish'). See also Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, p. 94.

[50] Psalm 36. 12–13: 'Insidiabitur peccator iusto et stridebit super eum dentibus suis. Dominus autem irridebit eum, quoniam prospicit quod veniet dies eius' ('The sinner shall watch the just man: and shall gnash upon him with his teeth. But the Lord shall laugh at him: for he foreseeth that his day shall come').

[51] For example, Proverbs 1. 25–26: 'Despexistis omne consilium meum, et increpationes meas neglexistis. / Ego quoque in intertiu vestro ridebo, et subsannabo, cum vobis id, quod timebatis, advenerit' ('You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared').

[52] Job 5. 18–22: 'Quia ipse vulnerat et medetur, percutit, et manus eius sanabunt. In sex tribulationibus liberabit te, et in septem non tanget te malum. In fame eruet te de morte et in bello de manu gladii. A flagello linguae absconderis et non timebis vastationem, cum venerit. In vastitate et fame ridebis et bestias terrae non formidabis' ('For he woundeth, and cureth: he striketh, and his hands shall heal. In six troubles he shall deliver thee, and in the seventh, evil shall not touch thee. In famine he shall deliver thee from death: and in battle, from the hand of the sword. Thou shalt be hidden from the scourge of the tongue: and thou shalt not fear calamity when it cometh. In destruction and famine then shalt laugh: and thou shalt not be afraid of the beasts of the earth'). Job 8. 20–21: 'Deus non proiciet simplicem nec porriget manum malignis, donec impleatur risu os tuum, et labia tua iubilo' ('God will not cast away the simple, nor reach out his hand to the evildoer: Until thy mouth be filled with laughter, and thy lips with rejoicing').

[53] Luke 6. 21: 'Beati, qui nunc fletis, quia ridebitis' ('Blessed are ye that weep now: for you shall laugh'). Psalm 125. 1–2, 5–7: 'In convertendo Dominus captivitatem Sion, facti sumus quasi somniantes. Tunc repletum est gaudio os nostrum, et lingua nostra exsultatione [...]. Qui seminant in lacrimis, in exsultatione metent. Euntes ibant et flebant semen spargendum portantes; venientes autem venient in exsultatione portantes manipulos suos' ('When the lord brought back the captivity of Sion, we became like men comforted. Then was our mouth filled with gladness; and our tongue with joy. [...] They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves'). Cf. Hartmann, *Über das Lachen*, pp. 195–97.

Job's fear.[54] Here, a different God is described from the one who laughed with Abraham and Sara. We read about a severe, merciless God, who is amused at the fear of the blameless Job and laughs.

The hostility towards laughter in the Old Testament becomes clearer in the so-called wisdom literature.[55] While Ecclesiastes states that laughter and crying have their time,[56] as exemplified in the Book of Job, in Ecclesiasticus, laughter becomes quite obviously a sinful, foolish, and thoughtless behaviour.[57] God laughs here too, once more at the sceptics and sinners.[58] Laughter is not expressly condemned in the Old Testament, though its sinful character is clearly demonstrated. Laughter creates distrust because sorrow is hidden by laughing: 'Etiam in risu cor dolore miscebitur, et extrema gaudii luctus occupat' ('Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy'; Proverbs 14. 13). Laughter arises from disbelief, scorn, and joy but never from joking.[59]

Tears as a symbol of fear of God and an exemplary, Christian way of life are found only in the New Testament.[60] There is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that Jesus Christ ever laughed, though he is found repeatedly to cry and

[54] Job 9. 21–23: 'Etiamsi simplex fuero, hoc ipsum ignorabit anima mea, et contemnam vitam meam. Unum est, quod locutus sum: Et innocentem et impium ipse consumit. Si subito flagellum occidat, de afflictione innocentium ridebit' ('Although I should be simple, even this my soul shall be ignorant of, and I shall be weary of my life. One thing there is that I have spoken, both the innocent and the wicked he consumeth. If he scourge, let him kill at once, and not laugh at the pains of the innocent').

[55] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, pp. 101–02.

[56] Ecclesiastes 3. 4: 'tempus flendi et tempus ridendi' ('A time to weep, and a time to laugh'). Ecclesiastes 7. 4: 'Melior est tristitia risu, quia per tristitiam vultus corrigitur animus' ('Anger is better than laughter: because by the sadness of the countenance the mind of the offender is corrected').

[57] Ecclesiasticus 21. 23: 'Fatuus in risu inaltat vocem suam vir autem sapiens vix tacite ridebit' ('A fool lifteth up his voice in laughter: but a wise man will scarce laugh low to himself').

[58] Wisdom 4. 17–18: 'Videbunt enim finem sapientis et non intellegent quid cogitaverit de illo Deus, et quare munierit illum Dominus. Videbunt et contemnent; illos autem Dominus irridebit' ('For they shall see the end of the wise man, and shall not understand what God hath designed for him, and why the Lord hath set him in safety. They shall see him, and shall despise him: but the Lord shall laugh them to scorn').

[59] Cf. Peter L. Berger, *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997).

[60] Cf. Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', pp. 134–35.

to mourn, most obviously beside the grave of Lazarus.[61] In the second half of the twelfth century Peter Cantor remarked of Jesus: 'Quomodo ergo eo uti non potuit? Forte potuit, sed non legitur eo usus fuisse'[62] (How could he not be able to laugh? Certainly he was able, but it cannot be read that he did). A clear message that laughter should be suppressed was thus sent to Christians.[63] Jesus himself suggests this in his Sermon on the Mount when he preached (echoing the teachings of the Old Testament): 'beati qui nunc fletis quia ridebitis [...] vae vobis qui ridentis nunc quia lugebitis et flebitis' ('Blessed are ye that weep now; for you shall laugh. [...] Woe to you that now laugh; for you shall mourn and weep'; Luke 6. 21 and 25).[64] He sets a shining example, demonstrating sympathy often by weeping.[65] And following his example, hermits, martyrs, and saints are often depicted crying. Kranz gives the example of the Holy Martinus, whom nobody ever saw furious, excited, or sad; neither was he ever seen laughing, while his face, according to Sulpicius Severus, shone of heavenly joy. A typical example of ideal *temperantia*.[66] A good example is found in the stories about the holy Wiborada, who lived at the beginning of the tenth century in St Gall. The *Vitae sanctae Wiboradae* tells us that as a young girl she rejected all solicitations of boisterous dissipation and controlled herself strictly and with maturity. She avoided impudent, childish games, and disdained the farcical performances of story-tellers.[67] However, a saint could have

[61] Ferreolus Ucetienses Episcopus, *Regula ad monachos*, *PL*, 66 (1847), cols 959–76 (cap. 24, col. 967D): 'hoc solum ei sufficiat, quia Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Evangelio teste, flevisse legimus, rissise nescimus' ('Certainly we know, as the Gospel assures, that our Lord Jesus Christ cried, but we do not know that he laughed'). Kuschel finds evidence in the apocrypha of Jesus laughing: as a child, he cried and laughed as other children ('Über die destruktive und befreiende Kraft des Lachens', p. 477). Louis Kretz, *Witz, Humor und Ironie bei Jesus* (Otten: Walter, 1981), argues that Jesus had a sense of humour.

[62] Petrus Cantor, *Verbum abbreviatum*, *PL*, 205 (1855), cols 21–528A (cap. 67, col. 203). Although Jesus was human and as a human had the ability to laugh, he restrained from laughter as an example to mankind. But on the other hand it is written nowhere in the Bible that Jesus never laughed. On the contrary some places suggest that Jesus laughed, for example, Matthew 9. 14 and 11. 19; John 2. 1–11, 15. 11, and 17. 13. See Thiede, *Das verheißene Lachen*, pp. 38–41.

[63] Suchomski, *Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis*, p. 11.

[64] Thiede, *Das verheißene Lachen*, p. 115.

[65] Thiede, *Das verheißene Lachen*, p. 40. Benke, *Die Gabe der Tränen*, pp. 135–36.

[66] Kranz, *Das göttliche Lachen*, pp. 51–52; Resnick, '"Risus monasticus", p. 97; Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', p. 133.

[67] [Ekkehard I of St Gall?], *Vitae sanctae Wiboradae*, ed. by Walter Berschin (= *Mitteilungen zur Vaterländischen Geschichte*, 51 (1983)).

a sense of humour: it is reported that St Laurentius asked to be turned while being burnt at the stake.[68] The New Testament states that we should convert our laughter to tears: 'Miseri estote et lugete et plorate; risus vester in luctum convertatur, et gaudium in maerorem' ('Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into sorrow'; James 4. 9–10). While these words functioned as a model for John Chrysostom and medieval monasticism, there are several instances of joyful laughter in the Old and the New Testament. The faithful laugh with joy in the sight of God's mercy or his miracles.[69] However, Jesus as a victim of mocking laughter is more prominent:[70]

> Praetereuntes autem blasphemabant eum moventes capita sua et dicentes: 'Qui destruis templum et in triduo illud reaedificas, salva temetipsum; si Filius Dei es, descende de cruce!' Similiter et principes sacerdotum illudentes cum scribis et senioribus dicebant: 'Alios salvos fecit, seipsum non potest salvum facere. Rex Israel est; descendat nunc de cruce, et credemus in eum. Confidit in Deo; liberet nunc, si vult eum. Dixit enim: "Dei Filius sum".' Idipsum autem et latrones, qui crucifixi erant cum eo, improperabant ei. (Matthew 27. 39–44)
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> [And they that passed by, blasphemed him, wagging their heads, And saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said: He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said: I am the Son of God. And the selfsame thing the thieves also, that were crucified with him, reproached him with.]

He is scorned too when visiting the deceased daughter of the leader of the synagogue:

> Adhuc eo loquente, veniunt ab archisynagogo dicentes: 'Filia tua mortua est; quid ultra vexas magistrum?' Iesus autem, verbo, quod dicebatur, audito, ait archisynagogo: 'Noli timere; tantummodo crede!' [...] Et veniunt ad domum archisynagogi; et videt tumultum et flentes et eiulantes multum, et ingressus ait eis: 'Quid turbamini et ploratis? Puella non est mortua, sed dormit.' Et irridebant eum. Ipse vero, eiectis omnibus, assumit patrem puellae et matrem et, qui secum erant, et ingreditur, ubi erat puella. (Mark 5. 35–40)
>
> [While he was yet speaking, some come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying: Thy daughter is dead. Why dost thou trouble the master any further? But Jesus, having heard the word that was spoken, saith to the ruler of the synagogue: Fear not, only believe. [...] And they come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue. And he seeth a tumult; and people weeping and wailing much. And going in, he saith to them: Why make you this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But he,

[68] Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', pp. 133–34. Thiede, *Das verheißene Lachen* p. 116.

[69] For example, Genesis 18. 12, Job 5. 22, Luke 6. 21. Cf. Resnick, '"Risus monasticus"', p. 95.

[70] Cf. Hartmann, *Über das Lachen*, p. 195.

having put them all out, taketh the father and the mother of the damsel and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.]

The Gods Laugh — Antiquity

The attitude towards jokes and laughter in antiquity is quite different from the Christian medieval positions which have been represented thus far.[71] The distinction between positive and negative laughter has its origins in antiquity, as does the the courtly virtue of moderation, *mâze*.

According to Homer the gods laugh an 'unquenchable laughter': the proverbial 'Homeric laughter', a laughter of malicious joy.[72] Their frivolity and arrogance are displayed in their loud, resounding laughter. They laugh at man's inferiority and inadequacies as well as the errors of other gods.[73] It is a destructive, ruthless laughter. The limping Hephaistos is mocked as a cheated husband and must put up with bad jokes. This heartless character of the laughter of the Homeric gods shows itself most clearly when it resounds over the battlefields of Troy.[74] Homer's gods are not exemplary in their laughter.

The Greeks clearly differentiated between good, natural laughing (*gelán*) and bad laughing (*katagelán*). Plato and Aristotle were disapproving of such uncontrolled and prolonged laughter. In Plato's late dialogue, *Philebos*, which contains the oldest theory of laughter known to us, we can read that mankind laughs at things inferior and reprehensible. Laughter is an expression of compulsiveness.[75] Plato does not disapprove of cheerfulness and humour but rather desires to control the human drives.[76] In philosophical discussions he permits no mockery at all.[77] His

[71] Tatlock, 'Mediaeval Laughter', pp. 289–94; Türcke, 'Götter lachen, Gott nicht', pp. 774–78; Verberckmoes, 'What about Medieval Humour?', p. 2.

[72] Cf. *Lachgemeinschaften, Kulturelle Inszenierung und soziale Wirkung von Gelächter im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Werner Röcke and Hans Rudolf Velten, Trends in Medieval Philology, 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), p. ix.

[73] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, pp. 24–25.

[74] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, p. 30.

[75] Renate Jurzik, *Der Stoff des Lachens, Studien über Komik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1985), p. 15.

[76] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, pp. 33–35 and 42.

[77] Kranz, *Das göttliche Lachen*, p. 55, who also provides references to other classical philosophers.

student Aristotle is more liberal. He too does not permit uncontrolled laughter, but recognizes laughter as a mark distinguishing humans from animals.[78] This leads him to more subtle distinctions: he prescribes the situations and functions of legitimate laughter. Like Plato, Aristotle wants to tame laughter, so he analyses laughter from ethical, rhetorical, and poetic angles.[79] In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle claims that man can only achieve a state of bliss if he attains the ability to control his behaviour by reason. This is the case when balance (*mesotes*) is found between two possible extremes.[80] So for laughter this means:

> Those who carry humour to excess are thought to be vulgar buffoons, striving after humour at all costs, and aiming rather at raising a laugh than at saying what is becoming and at avoiding pain to the object of their fun; while those who can neither make a joke themselves nor put up with those who do are thought to be boorish and unpolished. But those who joke in a tasteful way are called ready-witted, which implies a sort of readiness to turn this way and that.[81]

Significantly for the history of laughter in the Middle Ages, Aristotle already describes how laughter can differ by social class:

> [T]he well-bred man's jesting differs from that of a vulgar man, and the joking of an educated man from that of an uneducated. [...] The refined and well-bred man, therefore, will be as we have described, being as it were a law to himself.

[78] Aristotle, *De partibus animalium*, ed. by Pierre Louis (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1956), III, 10: 'That man alone is affected by tickling is due firstly to the delicacy of his skin, and secondly to his being the only animal that laughs.' See also Suchomski, *Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis*, p. 10. Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', attributes the idea that man is the only animal that laughs to Porphyrius without reference (p. 131). Boethius also understands man as a creature which is distinctive through its ability to laugh. Boethius, *In Prophyrii isagogen commenta*, ed. by Samuel Brandt, Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum, 48 (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1906), p. 80: 'nam omnis homo risibile est et nulla alia species risibili potest [...] quid est homo? risibile; quid est risibile? homo. et item: quid es hinnibile? equus' (Each man can laugh but no other species is able to laugh. [...] Who is human? Who can laugh. Who is able to laugh? Man. And as well: Who is able to snicker? A horse). Also see Boethius, *Commentaria in Porphyrium a se translatum*, *PL*, 64 (1866), cols 71–158D.

[79] Kuschel, 'Über die destruktive und befreiende Kraft des Lachens', p. 472. Also see Martin, 'Zur Idee einer Theologie des Lachens', p. 272. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, 'Humor und Geschichte: Eine Einführung', in *Kulturgeschichte des Humors*, ed. by Bremmer and Roodenburg, pp. 9–17 (pp. 12–13).

[80] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, p. 44.

[81] This and following from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W. D. Ross. <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.4.iv.html> [accessed 6 June 2009] (para. 8 of 9).

> Such, then, is the man who observes the mean, whether he be called tactful or ready-witted. The buffoon, on the other hand, is the slave of his sense of humour, and spares neither himself nor others if he can raise a laugh, and says things none of which a man of refinement would say, and to some of which he would not even listen. The boor, again, is useless for such social intercourse; for he contributes nothing and finds fault with everything. But relaxation and amusement are thought to be a necessary element in life. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV)

For the courtly teacher, Aristotle, it is clear that different social classes have different manners and therefore they also joke and laugh differently.[82] However, the well-trained and well-educated person knows how to control and to use his laughter reasonably. Such arguments were also maintained in Roman rhetoric, in which a distinction was made between formal jokes and jokes based on content. Both were rhetorical devices limited by just one guideline, that is, it was not permitted to imitate actors or jesters.[83]

Aristotle's references to his *Second Book of Poetics* hint at what we would have found in this book if the work still survived, but the poetic discussion is largely lost. Eco's 'reconstruction' only reflects what we would like to have. In *Rhetoric* Aristotle lists types of ridiculousness and assigns them to different classes:

> As to jests. These are supposed to be of some service in controversy. Gorgias said that you should kill your opponents' earnestness with jesting and their jesting with earnestness; in which he was right. Jests have been classified in the *Poetics*. Some are becoming to a gentleman, others are not; see that you choose such as become *you*. Irony better befits a gentleman than buffoonery; the ironical man jokes to amuse himself, the buffoon to amuse other people.[84]

In his introduction to the *First Book of Poetics* Aristotle explains some fundamental considerations which anticipate what might have been written in the second book. In the separation of the genres tragedy and farce, as well as their specific characteristics and topics, Aristotle leaves no doubt that laughter is of minor importance to him:

> Comedy, as we said, is mimesis of baser but not wholly vicious characters: rather, the laughable is one category of the shameful. For the laughable comprises any fault or mark

[82] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, p. 45.

[83] Bremmer and Roodenburg, 'Humor und Geschichte', pp. 12–13.

[84] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, based on the translation by W. Rhys Roberts, ed. by Lee Honeycut, Book 3, Chapter 18 <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~honeyl/Rhetoric/rhet3–18.html> [accessed 6 June 2009] (para. 5 of 5). Cf. Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, p. 46.

> of shame which involves no pain or destruction: most obviously, the laughable mask is something ugly and twisted, but not painfully.[85]

Aristotle then does not disapprove of laughter, but it is an ability to be mastered and used. Striking a balance between outrageous joking and a total lack of a sense of humour is a worthwhile aim of the free man.[86]

Noble Ideas of Laughter

The ideal of permanent joy by which courtly society of the twelfth century onwards defined itself can in fact be seen as early as the tenth century during which time *iocunditas* and *hilaritas* are expressions of the *magnanimitas* of noblemen in the early medieval period.[87] Otto I (d. 973) for example was said even at the hour of his death to sit down at the table joyfully and cheerfully.[88] However, as the teachings of the Church infiltrated the courts of the nobility so too did the disdain of laughter.[89] The noble courts became bound by contradictions as it was recognized that unbridled joy was sinful. At the courts, *hilaritas* forms a contrast to the limiting ideal of *temperantia* to which a nobleman should aspire. In line with

[85] Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Doreen C. Innes based on W. Rhys Roberts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), V (p. 45).

[86] Kuschel, *Lachen, Gottes und der Menschen Kunst*, p. 49.

[87] Hatto Kallfelz, 'Das Standesethos des Adels im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Würzburg, 1960), pp. 67–80. Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', p. 140. Le Goff argued that the word 'smile' did not exist in Latin and that *subridere* might rather be understood as laughing to oneself. He speculates therefore that 'smiling' might be invented in the Middle Ages ('Lachen im Mittelalter', pp. 52–53). While he sees an evolution of laughter throughout the Middle Ages, his argument is based on Bakhtin's problematic thesis. For Bakhtin's critics, see Aaron Gurjewitsch, 'Bachtin und der Karneval: Zu Dietz-Rüdiger Moser: "Lachkultur des Mittelalters? Michael Bachtin und die Folgen seiner Theorie"', *Euphorion*, 85 (1991), 423–29; Gurjewitsch, 'Bachtin und seine Theorie des Karnevals', in *Kulturgeschichte des Humors*, ed. by Bremmer and Roodenburg, pp. 57–63; Dietz-Rüdiger Moser, 'Lachkultur des Mittelalters, Michael Bachtin und die Folgen seiner Theorie', *Euphorion*, 84 (1990), 89–111; Dirk Schümer, 'Lachen mit Bachtin – ein geisteshistorisches Trauerspiel', *Merkur*, 56 (2002), 847–53.

[88] 'Cum autem hora esset, processit, laetus et hilaris ad mensam resedit': Widukind of Corvey, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri III*, ed. by H.-E. Lohmann and Paul Hirsch, MGH SS rer. Germ. i.u.s., 60, (Hannover: Hahn, 1935; repr. 1989), cap. 75.

[89] Kranz, *Das göttliche Lachen*, p. 57. Also see Hedda Ragotzky and Horst Wenzel, *Höfische Repräsentation: Das Zeremoniell und die Zeichen* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990); Joachim Bumke, 'Kultur und Gesellschaft: höfische', in *LexMa*, V (repr. 2002), cols 1565–68; C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness* (Philadelphia: University of Pensylvania Press, 1985).

Aristotle's *mesotes* a nobleman should not simply submit himself to his emotions, but must assess and react appropriately to the occasion, not only in terms of joy and laughter but also in the control of mourning and pain. An example in Wipo's *Gesta Chuonradi* demonstrates how important the control of emotions was, when the older Conrad said to the younger Conrad at the time of the election for king: 'Rebus prosperis condignum gaudium nec gravitatis modum excedit, nec quemquam ingratum esse pro acceptis beneficiis sinit' ('A joy according to the prospering luck does not exceed the degree of dignity').[90] Both men and women were required to retain their dignity (*gravitas*).[91] However, if joy is absent then insufficient *clementia* is attributed to the ruler. The serious nature of Henry I of Bavaria (d. 955) led the chronicler Widukind (d. later than 973) to observe that due to his serious character those that did not know him well thought that he would be less generous and joyful ('morum gravitate pollebat et ob id ab ignotis minus clemens iocundusque predicabatur').[92] However, there was a two-way traffic since the highest ranks of the Church were typically dominated by those of noble background. For example, Ruotger reports how Archbishop Brun (d. 965) fulfilled official duties with affable cheerfulness and courtly dignity.[93] He not only showed suitable joy, he often shed tears over his weaknesses.[94] A Christian ruler had to align his behaviour with Christian values and norms.[95] As these ideals became progressively institutionalized

[90] Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi II. imperatoris*, ed. by Harry Bresslau, MGH SS rer. Germ. i.u.s., 61, (Hannover: Hahn, 1915; repr 1993), cap. II.

[91] See also Kallfelz, *Das Standesethos des Adels*, pp. 69–70.

[92] Widukind, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum*, liber 2, cap. 36.

[93] *Ruotgers Lebensbeschreibung des Erzbischofs Bruno von Köln / Ruotgeri Vita Brunonis archiepiscopi Coloniensis*, ed. by Irene Ott, MGH SS rer. Germ. N.S., 10 (Cologne: Bohlau, 1951), cap. 8: 'Nullo autem hoc egit supercilio, set cum domestico lepore, tum urbana gravitate' (All this he never did with dark, wrinkled forehead, but with affable joy and courtly dignity).

[94] *Ruotgers Lebensbeschreibung des Erzbischofs Bruno von Köln*, ed. by Ott, cap. 29: 'Unde si quando suis coactus quodammodo reddidit, quod non debuit, excessum nunc modium fletu plerumque largiore detersit' (If from time to time he was forced to make concessions in some measure, which he should not have done, he wiped out this little slip by weeping more and more). Archbishop Adalbert acted quite differently: 'Itaque tam in bono, si misertus est, quam in malo, si iratus est, in utroque mensuram excedit' (So he regularly exceeded the right degree, in a good way when he took care of others, in a bad way when his anger grew): Adam von Bremen, *Magistri Adam Bremensis Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. by B. Schmeidler, 3rd edn, MGH SS rer. Germ., 2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1917), cap. 37.

[95] See Hans Hubert Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit* (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1968); Sibylle Mähl, *Quadriga virtutum: Die Kardinaltugenden in der Geistesgeschichte der Karolingerzeit*, AKG Beihefte, 9 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1969).

within courtly society, the restrictions on behaviour increased.[96] An exemplary ruler had to fulfil the specifications of *temperantia*. For example, Louis the Pious (d. 840)

> Numquam in risum exlatavit vocem suam, nec quando in summis festivitatibus ad laetitiam populi procedebant themilici, scurri et mimi cum coraulis et citharsis ad mensam coram eo, tunc ad mensuram ridebat populus coram eo, ille numquam nec dentes candidos suos in risu ostendit.[97]
>
> [never raised his voice to loud laughter. Even on high holidays when actors, buffoons, pipers and zither players performed at table to entertain the people, who in his presence laughed only moderately, he did not expose his teeth for laughter, in spite of the fact they were very white.]

And Thietmar of Merseburg (d. 1018) states of Otto III (d. 1002) that, although he was always visibly cheerful, his conscience within was troubled by numerous offences which he continually tried to expiate during the night by remaining awake, praying heartfully, and weeping floods of tears.[98]

Although the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with their travelling entertainers, ministrels, musicians, and fools, are known for their courtly culture, this atmosphere of celebration already prevailed in earlier centuries.[99] There were many early calls from the Church to put an end to jesting and to rude laughter about lewd jokes.[100] The Church frequently issued interdicts against the courtly culture

[96] Gerd Althoff, 'Der König weint: Rituelle Tränen in öffentlicher Kommunikation', in *'Aufführung' und 'Schrift' in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Jan-Dirk Müller, Germanistische Symposien der Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, 17 (Weimar: Metzler, 1996), pp. 239–52 (p. 242). Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, pp. 481–83.

[97] Thegan, *Die Taten Kaiser Ludwigs (Gesta Hludowici imperatoris)*, ed. by Ernst Tremp, MGH SS rer. Germ. i.u.s., 64 (Hannover: Hahn, 1995), cap. 12 and 19. Cf. Innes, '"He never even allowed his white teeth to be bared in laughter", pp. 131–56.

[98] *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korveier — Überarbeitung (Thietmari Merseburgensis episcopi Chronicon)*, ed. by Robert Holtzmann, MGH SS rer. Germ. N.S., 9 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1935; repr. 1996), liber 4, cap. 48.

[99] Cf. Werner Mezger, *Hofnarren im Mittelalter: Vom tieferen Sinn eines seltsamen Amts* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1981); Michael Richter, *The Oral Tradition in the Early Middle Ages*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, 71 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994), pp. 41–42 and 72–73; Hans Rudolf Velten, 'Komische Körper: Zur Funktion von Hofnarren und zur Dramaturgie des Lachens im Spätmittelalter', *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 11 (2001), 292–317; Garland, 'Post Risus', pp. 265–66.

[100] Alpert of Metz, *De diversitate temporum libri II*, ed. by Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS, 4 (Hannover: Hahn, 1841; repr. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1982), pp. 700–23 (p. 719). Hincmar of

of joy, though the frequency of the interdicts demonstrates they were probably largely unsuccessful and that lay folk were resistant to clerical norms.[101] Wild feasts, unrestrained celebrations, and the excessive consumption of alcohol were condemned. When Emperor Henry III (d. 1056) in 1043 expelled without payment the ministrels who came to his court for his wedding, he was attempting to set a Christian example for his people.[102] Thus, as in monastic and clerical culture, laughter and jokes were censured in courtly society. A Christian ruler might smile mildly to express his pleasure at God's works, but loud laughter transgressed the accepted mores. When Henry II of Germany (d. 1024) humiliated a poor man for his own amusement by having him brushed with honey and then having a bear lick it off, he was rebuked justifiably by the bishops present.[103] Otto III and Louis the Pious, on the contrary, were regarded as exemplary figures.

In literary works the Christian ruler is clearly distinguished from the heathen ruler in his behaviour. The Christian ruler could control his emotions while the barbarian ruler succumbed to his extravagantly.[104] Der Stricker describes a Christian king who for four reasons never laughed: thoughts of the suffering Christ, the uncertainty of his own death, fear of the Last Judgement, and fear of hell.[105]

At official meetings, particularly at feasts of reconciliation or the closing of a conflict, all parties were expected to demonstrate good and relaxed humour.[106]

Reims, *Capitula synodica*, ed. by Rudolf Pokorny and Martina Stratmann, with Wolf-Dieter Runge, MGH Capit. episc., 2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1995), cap. 14.

[101] Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', p. 136. Any demonstration of joy during the liturgy was also condemned (Küsters, 'Freude, Leid und Glück: Mittelalter', p. 308).

[102] Frutolf of Michelsberg, *Chronik*, ed. by Franz-Joseph Schmale and Irene Schmale-Ott, Freiherr von Stein Gedächtnisausgabe, 15 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), liber 30, cap 64: 'unde infinitam histrionum et ioculatorum multitudinem non solum muneribus, sed etiam cibo potuque vacuam et merentem abire permisit'.

[103] 'abbatis Stabulensis' in *Vita Popponis*, ed. by Walther Wattenbach, MGH SS, 11 (Hannover: Hahn, 1878), pp. 291–316, cap. 12. Cf. Philippe Walter, 'Der Bär und der Erzbischof: Masken und Mummenschanz bei Hinkmar von Reims und Adalbero von Laon', in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter: Paderborner Symposion des Mediävistenverbandes*, ed. by Detlef Altenburg, Jörg Jarnut, and Hans-Hugo Steinhoff (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1991), pp. 377–88; Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', pp. 141–42.

[104] Schubert, *Zur Theorie des Gebarens im Mittelalter*, pp. 121–57.

[105] Cf. Schmitz, 'Ein Narr, der da lacht', p. 139, who cites Suchomski, *Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis*, pp. 20–21 and 63–64.

[106] Gerd Althoff, 'Der frieden-, bündnis- und gemeinschaftstiftende Charakter des Mahles im frühen Mittelalter', in *Essen und Trinken in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, ed. by Irmgard Bitsch, Trude

Emperor Henry IV (d. 1106) at the table of the pope in Canossa in 1077 expressed his disagreement by an unfriendly face and by scratching the tabletop.[107] There is a well-known literary example of reconciliation by joking in *Waltharius*.[108] A bitter fight is described in detail between three opponents. The combat ends when the rivals agree that they seem to be equally strong and that to continue fighting would be senseless. All three fighters are seriously wounded, if not mutilated: one has lost his right arm, the second a leg, the third an eye. They show mutual respect for their martial abilities and play down their grievous disfigurements through jokes: one must in the future hug his woman with only his left arm and another must summon his servant with a wink.[109]

Attachments find their expression in a kind, cheerful attitude that can include joking.[110] On the occasion of the admission of Conrad I (d. 918) into the confraternity of the community of St Gall he was obliged to express his special friendship with the monks. After giving gifts to the monks, he held a feast for the whole abbey. There, Conrad played jokes on the monks. He rolled apples towards the youngest monks to see if they could catch them, and he put gold coins on the tongues of the pupils that were reading to those at the table. He was amazed when one of them spat the gold coin out; Conrad commented, 'If he lives long enough, he will be a good monk one day.'[111] Both jokes can be considered a test of the monks' discipline, and the fruit and the gold as gifts to the abbey.[112] Conrad's close relationship with the monks of St Gall allowed these gestures to be performed, and the good

Ehlert, and Xenja von Ertzdorff, 2nd edn (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1990), pp. 13–25 (pp. 14–15). Karl-Sigismund Kramer, 'Mahl und Trunk', in *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1984), III, cols 154–56; Neithard Bulst, 'Feste und Feiern unter Auflagen, Mittelalterliche Tauf-, Hochzeits- und Begräbnisordnungen in Deutschland und Frankreich', in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter*, ed. by Altenburg, Jarnut, and Steinhoff, pp. 39–51.

[107] Ranger of Lucca, *Vita metrica S. Anselmi Lucensis episcopi*, ed. by Karl W. Hiersemann, MGH SS, 30. 2 (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1934; repr. 1963), lines 3205–09.

[108] *Waltharius*, in *Nachträge zu den Poetae aevi Carolini*, I, ed. by Karl Strecker, MGH Poetae, 6. 1 (Weimar: Herman Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1951; repr. 1990), lines 1360–1442.

[109] *Waltharius*, lines 1430–33, 1435–38.

[110] Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue: Zum politischen Wert der Gruppenbildung im frühen Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), p. 205.

[111] Ekkehard IV of St Gall, *Casus Sancti Galli*, cap. 14.

[112] At the end of the eleventh century we can find a *hilaris dator* in French charters more and more frequently. It was not enough to do a good deed but it had to be done voluntarily and with joy. Becher, '"Cum lacrimis et gemitu"', p. 39. Le Goff, 'Lachen im Mittelalter', p. 55.

humour of the monk's response consolidated the relationship.[113] As today, jokes were simply an essential part of a friendly atmosphere. Archbishop Albero of Trier (d. 1152) entertained the king as well as the princes at court with his amusing conversation and his jokes.[114] Frederick I Barbarossa (d. 1190) visited Pope Alexander III (d. 1181) in his private rooms one morning during the solemnities celebrating the peace between Venice and the Pope.[115] Their new intimacy, which the two longstanding, deadly enemies showed and confirmed by jokes, did not threaten their mutual respect because the jokes were *ioci moderati*.[116] However, jokes could backfire. Gregory of Tours relates in great detail the events of the civil war in Tours, including the peace treaties and the rituals and numerous gestures of friendship that accompanied the peace. But in a last devastating scene, Gregory reports:

> The feud between the citizens of Tours, which I above described as ended, broke out afresh with revived fury. After the murder of the kinsfolk of Chramnesind, Sichar formed a great friendship with him; so fond of one another did they grow that often they shared each other's meals and slept in the same bed. One evening Chramnesind made ready a supper, and invited Sichar. His friend came, and they sat down together to the feast. But Sichar, letting the wine go to his head, kept making boastful remarks against Chramnesind, and is reported at last to have said: 'Sweet brother, thou owest me great thanks for the slaying of thy relations; for the [compensation] made to thee for their death hath caused gold and s[il]ver to abound in thy house. But for this cause, which established thee not a little, thou wert this day poor and destitute.' Chramnesind heard these words with bitterness of heart, and said within himself: 'If I avenge not the death of my kinsmen, I deserve to lose the name of man, and to be called weak woman.' And straightway he put out the lights and cleft the head of Sichar with his dagger. The man fell and died, uttering but a faint sound as the last breath left him.[117]

[113] Cf. Gerd Althoff, 'Zur Bedeutung symbolischer Kommunikation für das Verständnis des Mittelalters', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 31 (1997), 370–89 (p. 381).

[114] Balderich, *Gesta Alberonis*, ed. by Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH SS, 7 (Hannover: Hahn, 1846; repr. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1995), cap. 26.

[115] See Gerd Althoff, 'Friedrich Barbarossa als Schauspieler? Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Friedens von Venedig', in *Chevaliers errants, demoiselles et l'Autre: Höfische und nachhöfische Literatur im europäischen Mittelalter. Festschrift für Xenja von Ertzdorff zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Trude Ehlert (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1998), pp. 3–20.

[116] Cardinal Boso, *Les Vies des papes (Gesta Pontificum Romanorum)*, in *Le Liber pontificalis: Texte, Introduction et Commentaire*, 3 vols, ed. by Louis Duchesne [1886] (Paris: de Boccard, 1955–57), II, 440. Cf. Verberckmoes, 'What about Medieval Humour?', p. 4.

[117] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, trans. by O. M. Dalton, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), II, 387; in *The Early Middle Ages: 500–1000: Sources in Western Civilization* ed. by Robert Brentano (Berkeley: Free Press, University of California, 1964), pp. 123–27, chap. 8:

Typical elements of ritual friendship precede the description of the feast: the shared table and bed. In addition, both parties have assured one another of their mutual affection several times. Gregory of Tours clearly attributes Sichar's murder to his bad joke, through which he draws attention to the disgrace of both himself and Chramnesind: his being the enrichment of another man through his payment of costly compensation, and Chramnesind's, the failure to avenge the murder of his kin. Such jokes would be better given in homeopathic doses.[118]

A story told about Emperor Henry II shows us that jokes could be used to punish and ridicule without any shared camraderie. He plays a trick on the Paderborn Bishop Meinwerk (d. 1036) in order to punish him for his worldly way of life, taking advantage of the Bishop's limited knowledge of Latin, which was well known. Henry erased the syllable *fa-* from the words *famulis* and *famulabus* in a prayer for the deceased in the missal and then asked Meinwerk to celebrate a requiem service. Meinwerk promptly blundered into the trap. Although he immediately corrected himself, Meinwerk left himself open to Henry's mockery: 'Ego [...] patri meo et matri, non mulis et mulabas meis missam celebrari rogavi' (I wanted you to celebrate a service for my father and my mother, not for donkeys).[119]

King Cnut became King of England following Edmund's assassination, having promised to raise above all others the man that would help him defeat his opponent. The assassin reminded him of his promise: 'Salue, rex integer, qui semirex heri fuisti; et utinam auctorem does remuneres integritatis, cuius manu sublatus est tuus hostis, et unicus euulsus e Terra' ('Hail to you, whole king, who yesterday was but half a king; and may you recompense the author of your wholeness by whose hand your enemy has been removed and your one foe rooted out of earth'). Cnut inquired into who had done this favour for him; the assassin, in fact the servant of the murdered, answered 'ego'. Cnut's response reveals a dark sense of humour. Offended by the assassin, he had the murderer of his opponent taken captive, and as he had promised, his head was raised above all others: 'Tunc rex eum

'Gregory of Tours: His Faith and the World Around Him' <http://www.mcah.columbia.edu/medmil/pages/non-mma-pages/text_links/bretano_franks.html> [accessed 6 June 2009] (para. 5 of 5). See also Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, ed. by Wilhelm Arndt and Bruno Krusch [1884], in *Gregorii Turonensis Opera*, I: *Libri historiarum X*, ed. by Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH SS rer. Merov., 1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1937–51; repr. 1992).

[118] Cf. Kallfelz, *Das Standesethos des Adels*, pp. 67–78. When alcohol had done its work often such a faux pas happened, as shown by Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*, p. 208.

[119] *Vita Meinwerci episcopi Patherbrunnensis*, ed. by Franz Tenckhoff, MGH SS rer. Germ. i.u.s., 59 (Hannover: Hahn, 1921; repr. 1983), cap. 186.

sublime[m] rapi fecit, et in altissima quercu suspendit, debito meritoque fine seruorum' ('Then the king had him strung up high and hanged from the tallest oak: the due and proper end of such servants').[120] This behaviour of Cnut can be explained in several ways: he certainly did not want to be reminded of the disgraceful way in which he had gained the throne, especially since it was not through his own act. Moreover, a murderer of a king ought to be punished, independently of whether or not this murderous deed had helped his successor. But it seems too that Cnut wanted to attain satisfaction for the servant's lack of respect to the King and for his overconfident answer to the King's enquiry. Cnut provided a just end for the servant with a suitable blow.

Such rituals and gestures that we see in these historical narratives can be exaggerated in literary narratives. In the *Nibelungenlied* the poet manipulates his audience's knowledge of ritualistic banqueting and joking. Jokes are the impetus for the devastating fight between the Burgundians and Huns which erupts at the banquet. There are two levels of humour: that which has a narrative function within the poem, and that which is shared between the poet and his audience. The poet quite specifically uses the violations of proper ritual for effect when he seasons the banquet scene with macabre jokes and has the feast become a trigger for total destruction.[121] The central figure in this scene is Hagen of Tronje. It is he who as a perverse joke converts the ritual 'Minnetrinken', an expression of friendship and heartfelt connection, into a funeral ceremony:[122]

> Dô der strît niht anders kunde sîn erhaben
> [...]
> dô hiez si tragen ze tische den Etzelen sun.
> wie kunde ein wîp durch râche immer vreislîcher tuon?
> [...]
> nu trinken wir die minne unde gelten's küneges wîn.
> der junge vogt der Hiunen, der muoz der aller êrste sîn.
> [...]
> Dô sluoc daz kint Ortlieben Hagen der helt guot,
> daz im gegen der hende ame swerte vlôz daz bluot

[120] Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, ed. and trans. by M. R. James, rev. by C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 430–33.

[121] Otto Neudeck, 'Das Spiel mit den Spielregeln: Zur literarischen Emanzipation von Formen körperhaft-ritualsierter Kommunikation im Mittelalter', *Euphorion*, 95 (2001), 287–303 (pp. 289–95).

[122] Cf. Ulrich Mattejiet, 'Minnetrinken', *LexMA*, VI (repr. 2002), col. 651.

> unt daz der küneginne daz houbet spranc in die schôz.
> dô huop sich under degenen ein mort grimmec unde grôz.[123]
>
> [As the fight could not be started in another way [...] she ordered to carry Etzel's son to the table. How could a wife act worse out of revenge? [...] Now we drink in honour of the dead and sacrifice the King's wine. The first drink is to be meant for the young Vogt. [...] There Hagen, the capable hero, killed Ortlieb the child, so that blood ran down the blade towards the hands and his head flew to the Queen's lap. Because of that the knights started a great and horrible slaughter.]

Hagen does not perform the ritual spilling of wine, but he spills the blood of an innocent child. The situation then escalates with the murder of a Hun. The characters, as well as the narrator, comment jocularly.[124] The narrator continues his joking when Dancwart, who has been involved in a fight just outside the banquet hall, enters. Rather than immediately calling the banqueters to arms, he instead rebukes the frightened staff, who dropped food and drink as he entered the hall. When the fighting taking place outside then spills inside, the narrator himself takes it to the extreme by describing the battle's noise as the proper music for a banquet (lines 1912–2002). On a literary level, the jokes in the *Nibelungenlied* achieve their intended effect.[125] The ritual obligations are manipulated to bring out fundamental hostility through macabre jokes.[126]

[123] *Das Nibelungenlied. Kudrun: Text, Nacherzählung, Wort- und Begriffserklärungen*, ed. by Werner Hoffmann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), lines 1912–61. Also see Jan Dirk Müller, *Spielregeln für den Untergang: Die Welt des Nibelungenlieds* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), p. 428. There he refers to Ute Schwab, 'Weinverschütten und Minnetrinken: Verwendung und Umwandlung metaphorischer Hallentopik im *Nibelungenlied*', in *Pöchlarner Heldenliedgespräch: Das Nibelungenlied und der mittlere Donauraum*, ed. by Klaus Zatloukal, Philologica Germanica, 12 (Vienna: Fassbaender, 1990), pp. 59–101. This is no isolated case as shown by Gerd Althoff, 'Die Veränderbarkeit von Ritualen im Mittelalter', in *Formen und Funktionen*, ed. by Althoff, pp. 157–76 (p. 171). For further examples, see Widukind, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum*, liber 2, cap. 20; *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg*, ed. by Holtzmann, liber 7, cap. 47.

[124] Neudeck, 'Das Spiel mit den Spielregeln', p. 294.

[125] For a discussion of the function of laughter and jokes in medieval literature, see Gerhild Scholz Williams, 'Das Fremde erkennen: Zur Erzählfunktion des Lachens im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit', in *Semiotik, Rhetorik und Soziologie des Lachens: Vergleichende Studien zum Funktionswandel des Lachens vom Mittelalter zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Lothar Fietz, Joerg O. Fichte, and Hans-Werner Ludwig (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), pp. 82–96.

[126] Neudeck, 'Das Spiel mit den Spielregeln', p. 295.

The Weeping Middle Ages?

Historical sources as well as literary sources are subject to the interests and intentions of their writers. To achieve their intention, however, writers need to offer a credible representation.[127] The veracity of the events and actions as described in the sources is not important for our discussion. What is essential is the social conditioning, specifically the regulation of emotions, emerging from these writings.[128] At every demonstration of emotion the appropriateness of laughter was always to be taken into account. During both antiquity and the Middle Ages the showing of joy and awkward, stupid laughter were differentiated. Malicious joy was frowned upon, but a certain cheerfulness was one of the ideals of the nobility and of clerics. Crying tears was a Christian duty in the Middle Ages. As a king wept to show that he was a particularly Christian ruler, all other Christians were to weep for their sins as a plea for forgiveness, in order to increase their joy in paradise: the vale of sorrows on earth was flooded by tears. When laughter appears in sources it is often a stereotypical description of laughing and joking at noble feasts. When we find laughter in didactic texts, we read about its inappropriateness, its dangers, and how to control this unique human ability. So, the mistaken impression of the Middle Ages as a dark age of tears is based on the frequent tears, the overwhelming weeping, and the ambiguous lack of laughter in the sources, too. While laughter was subject to rules of decorum, its appearance in the sources shows that it must have been a part of everyday life.

[127] Gerd Althoff, 'Spielen die Dichter mit den Spielregeln der Gesellschaft?', in *Mittelalterliche Literatur und Kunst im Spannungsfeld von Hof und Kloster: Ergebnisse der Berliner Tagung, 9–11.10.1997*, ed. by Nigel F. Palmer and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), pp. 53–71 (pp. 55–56). See also Neudeck, 'Das Spiel mit den Spielregeln', p. 290.

[128] This idea is explained in detail by Hermann Kamp, 'Die Macht der Zeichen und Gesten: öffentliches Verhalten bei Dudo von Saint-Quentin', in *Formen und Funktionen*, ed. by Althoff, pp. 125–55. See also Neudeck, 'Das Spiel mit den Spielregeln', p. 302; Althoff, 'Der König weint', pp. 239–52.

'Cel neim [...] est Fols': 'Fool-like' Dwarfs and the Irony of Fictionality in French Texts around 1200

Tanja-Isabel Habicht

In numerous Old French verse romances of the post-Chrétien era, fools are often depicted as behaving beyond the norm in either funny, grotesque, or cunning ways. In this way they parody behavioural patterns and consequently exhibit incorrect behaviour, so that the experience of both protagonist and reader would be diminished without them. The authors of this twelfth-century literature aim to go beyond the established norms created by Chrétien in Arthurian Romance. However, the opportunity to challenge the norms of Arthurian romance is not only reserved for the fool. Alongside the 'real' fools, the authors conspicuously allow dwarfs to mirror the fools' unorthodox behaviour and to slip into the role of 'fool-like' challenger of norms.

This article focuses on how the dwarfs' roles challenge both the courtly norm in a 'fool-like' way and literary and generic conventions. Basing itself on the three categories this present volume addresses, it will examine the way in which the dwarfs use voices, gestures, and laughter to undermine the traditional Arthurian norms and to ridicule the basic elements of the Arthurian romance. In this way, the dwarfs question the ideals of the court through the 'fool-like' potential of their ugly form, their grotesque physique, and their foul-mouthed, often burlesque behaviour. As a result, they succeed in demoting, contorting, and therefore parodying the world of the court. Furthermore, this analysis demonstrates that the conventional romance structure is inadequate for post-Chrétien, twelfth-century

The title of this essay is from line 4182 of *The Romance of Yder*, ed. and trans. by Alison Adams (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983).

romance. On a metafictional level, the authors of medieval romances are playing with the fictional content of the genre. The gestures and voices of the dwarf scenes are analysed as episodes which point to the metafictional conditions of Arthurian romances.

The gestures and voices of these fool-like dwarfs, only a few of which can be considered here, work to ridicule ideological aspects of these texts in (1) the break with chivalry; (2) the parody of the courtly discourse on love; and (3) the ironical treatment of fiction.

The Break with Chivalry

In *Le Roman de Fergus*, a parody of an Arthurian romance,[1] Guillaume le Clerc creates many of his scenes in imitation of well-known episodes in Chrétien's works, but this imitation then becomes parodic. For example, Guillaume formulates a parody of the most famous dwarf scene in Chrétien's *Erec*.[2] At the beginning of Chrétien's *Erec*, the eponymous hero, accompanied by Queen Guenièvre and her maid, encounters the knight Yder, who is accompanied by a dwarf and a maiden. The same trio of knight, dwarf, and maiden occurs in many romances that I consider, allowing the parodic intention to emerge.

In Guillaume's text, during the night in the forest (line 2829), Fergus encounters an ugly dwarf who, in an uncourtly manner, challenges him to a fight. The dwarf slices off a part of the head of Fergus's horse, just above its eyelids. Fergus, who is alien to such villainous behaviour, becomes angry and aggressively attacks his weaker opponent. He strikes the dwarf until he bleeds. The dwarf's scream wakes the lord of the dwarf who intends to rush to the rescue. Contrary to the situation in *Erec*, where Erec is without weapons, it is the dwarf's knight who is unarmed. While Erec is prevented from fighting Yder by the chivalric code forbidding an unarmed knight to fight, Fergus gives the unarmed knight the opportunity to arm himself and to fight against him. The knight's beloved brings him his armour, and the fight begins, and Fergus may of course decide on the result for himself. Fergus offends the knight, slices the back of his head open, and makes sneering comments at the knight. Fergus even goes as far as making burlesque

[1] Guillaume le Clerc, *The Romance of Fergus*, ed. by Wilson Frescoln (Sharon Hill: William H. Allen, 1983).

[2] Chrétien de Troyes, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Daniel Poirion (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1994). The dwarf scene is found in *Erec et Enide*, lines 138–275.

comments about his scalp sample. The knight, dwarf, and maiden surrender and are sent to the Arthurian court by the winner in order to truthfully recount Fergus's victory and strength (line 3585), as happens in *Erec*.

The intertextual reading makes it clear that Guillaume Le Clerc has created his scene as a caricature of the initial scene in *Erec*, which becomes ridiculous through grotesque gestures (the unequal but bloody fight), as well as through burlesque comments. Whereas Erec was meant to have an equal fight, which fulfils the rules of the game, Fergus only applies the chivalrous ideals of the court superficially, in allowing his opponent to arm himself, while his behaviour in the fight is anything but chivalrous.

The break with chivalry is further driven in *Jaufré* by the Provençal author's use of two dwarf scenes.[3] When, in the adventure with the *chevalier à la blanche lance*, Jaufré comes across a beautiful white lance, which he wishes to take with him, a dwarf appears and threatens to hang him. Jaufré accuses him of being a liar, so the dwarf calls his master, who also threatens to hang Jaufré, unless he surrender, just as he has hanged thirty-three other knights. If he were to surrender, his life would be spared, but as the master's devotee, Jaufré would be obliged to adopt a new way of life, one which would invalidate the code of chivalry (line 1444): Jaufré would have to abandon the life of a knight (never being able to take up a fight), sew his clothes himself, and make do with a poor, meat-free diet. Whilst in discussion with the dwarf's master, Jaufré asks how he could accept this offer if he does not know how to do all that is asked of him. The dwarf's master tells him that he would teach him how to weave, sew, and make his own clothes ('"Eu t'o farai mot ricamens", | Dis lo cavalier, "enseinar, | Teiser e cozir e talar"', lines 1456–58; I really will | teach you said the knight | how to weave, to sew and to cut/make your clothes). The required services do not only contradict chivalry, but would also bring to an end his life within the code of chivalry and the court ('Qe jamais a sa vida ...', line 1444; Never again will he be able to ...). Jaufré's refusal to accept these terms leads to combat. When Jaufré defeats his opponent, he behaves in a most unchivalrous way, as does the *chevalier à la blanche lance*, and kills the master who meets his death in the same way as his thirty-three victims, by hanging. Unlike Jaufré, the terrified dwarf begs for mercy, thereby following the rules of chivalrous behaviour, and he is pleased to fulfil his task of recounting the adventure at the Arthurian court. Fleischmann here notes 'a hint of a world upside down, where knights comport

[3] *Les Troubadours*, vol. I: *Jaufré, Flamenca, Barlaam et Josaphat*, trans. by René Lavaud and René Nelli (Bourges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1960).

themselves like peasants while dwarfs observe the conventions of courteous behavior'.[4]

The dwarf episode repeats itself in the following adventure with the *Sergent*. The *Sergent* also proves to be an unchivalrous subject, whilst the dwarf heads to the Arthurian court as reporter of Jaufré's adventure (lines 1928–2064, line 2148). The possibility to recall the conventional world of Arthurian knights creates a parody of its artificiality. The repeatedly asked question concerning the legitimacy of chivalry[5] is answered by the dwarf scenes. Ironically, it is the dwarfs and no longer the representatives of chivalry who continue to respect the code of chivalry: the dwarfs beg for mercy and help to free prisoners (line 1990). By reporting Jaufré's adventures to the court, the dwarf finally fulfils the task which brings both spheres of the Arthurian romance together — adventures in the forest and the recounting of these adventures at court.[6]

The Parody of the Courtly Discourse on Love

Whilst *Jaufré* and *Fergus* question the tasks of chivalry and use irony to demonstrate their potential end, *La Vengeance Raguidel* uses the voice and gestures of dwarfs to parody the courtly discourse on love.[7] Gauvain, who left the court in order to avenge the murder of Raguidel, encounters Raguidel's widow and her dwarf in the last third of the romance. Our attention is drawn to the dwarf's pose: disguised as Amor, he holds a bow in his hand and sings of famous love stories, of Tristan and Isolde, of Helen and Paris. With his ugly figure — he has a hump, following Arthurian tradition and is 'lait et camus' (line 4913; ugly and flat-nosed) — he is allowed to slip into the parody. His disguise and his sorrowful love stories set the scene for the melancholic mood of his mistress, which she describes in detail. In order to mark her grief, she wears her clothes inside out and rides facing

[4] See Suzanne Fleischmann, 'Jaufré or Chivalery Askew: Social Overtones of Parody in Arthurian Romance', *Viator*, 12 (1981), 104–29 (p. 110).

[5] Fleischmann, 'Jaufré or Chivalery Askew', p. 105.

[6] See Isabel Habicht, 'L'Aventure de Kâlogrenant à la fontaine magique ou la sensibilité esthétique dans l'autre monde de la forêt', in *La Forêt dans les domaines germaniques, nordiques et slaves*, ed. by Anne-Marie Gresser, Cahiers de la Maison de la Recherche en Sciences humaines de Caen (Caen: University of Caen Press, 2006), pp. 33–45.

[7] Raoul de Houdenc, *La Vengeance Raguidel* (lines 4975–81), in Raoul de Houdenc, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. II, ed. by Mathias Friedwagner (Halle: Niemeyer, 1909; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1975).

backwards until the day of revenge (line 4926). The behaviour of dwarf and mistress are clearly narrated in the style of Arthurian romance. When both are labelled as narrators of love and suffering, they sound like court poets or troubadours.[8] The reader may be reminded of the love-monologues of Soredamor and Alexandre in Chrétien's *Cligès* (lines 439–1050), but what was taken seriously in Chrétien becomes dissolute and meaningless in the *Vengeance*. In this way, this romance ridicules the Arthurian style, which is no longer to be taken seriously. It becomes clear that stereotypical love stories are the focus as the tone of Arthurian romance is adopted, so that the audience can notice the intertextual references: other points in *La Vengeance Raguidel* also make clear that courtly discourse on love has become highly stylized: For example, Gaut Destroit (lines 2064–2355), out of the unrequited love she has for Gauvain, has planned for their mutual murder-suicide, even preparing a joint tomb for Gauvain and herself. The portrayal of this death and the shared grave is clearly conceived as a stylization of an Isolde and Tristan love story. The misogynous female image now fits into the parody of courtly love discourse in *La Vengeance Raguidel*, with the aim of breaking away from the romance genre. The author moves away from the ideal female image of courtly romance and propagates a satirical female image recognizable to the reader more from *fabliaux* and the power of women topos in art and literature.[9] Almost all the women in this romance are portrayed negatively, and the fickleness of the women is regularly underlined.[10] This fickleness is present in the integrated story about Ydain: Gauvain, the knight who is immune to infatuations, falls in love with the devious Ydain and has a rosy view of the world. In complete blindness, he advises King Arthur to grant the required *don contraignant* to the dwarf Druÿdain, who has arrived at court (line 4238). The ugly and disparately built dwarf Druÿdain naturally wants Ydain for himself, whereby he introduces an etymological argument: his name *drus Ydain*

[8] See Stoyan Atanassov, 'La "Conjointure" dans la *Vengeance Raguidel*', in *Le Môyen Âge dans la modernité: mélanges offerts à Roger Dragonetti*, ed. by Jean R. Scheidegger, Sabine Girardet, and Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion, 1996), pp. 49–63 (p. 60).

[9] H. Diane Russell explains, 'The *Power of Women* topos refers to a group of themes, in literature and the fine arts, that focused on women who used their feminine wiles to triumph over men': H. Diane Russell with Bernadine Barnes, *Eva/Ave: Women in Renaissance and Baroque Prints* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1990), p. 15. See also Susan L. Smith, *The Power of Women: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

[10] See Anne-Marie Cadot-Colin, 'Images de la Femme dans la Vengeance Raguidel', in *Hommage à Jean-Charles Payen: farai chansoneta novele. Essais sur la liberté créatrice au Moyen-âge*, ed. by Huguette Legros (Caen: Centre de publication de l'Université, 1989), pp. 113–21 (p. 117).

(line 4350), 'friend of Ydain', makes his claim legitimate. Gauvain and Druÿdain agree to joust, on the way to which the three companions, Gauvain, Ydain, and their dog, come across a knight urinating (line 4450). The narrator emphasizes that he cannot say where Ydain looked and what she saw. Her reaction is to walk over to him, which suggests that she has seen something very promising, and more than Gauvain has to offer. This questions indirectly Gauvain's potency. In contrast to the unfaithful Ydain, pursuant to the ancient literary motif, the faithful dogs appear (line 4630) but do not defect to the challenging knight.[11] Gauvain finally gets Ydain back and, unsurprisingly, defeats the dwarf in the joust but, nevertheless, turns Ydain over to the dwarf as he has tired of her. Gauvain warns Druÿdain of women's fickleness and that he should be wary of Ydain (line 4794). Gauvain thereby punishes not only the dwarf, but also Ydain: she must now marry the ugly dwarf, who already symbolizes the fickle and twisted nature of women in his physical disparateness (lines 4170–4211). *Vengeance Raguidel* not only parodies the love concept of the court which has become the fixed model, but also devalues courtly love itself. With the exemplification of the phrase *femina nulla bona*, the genre of courtly romances loses its foundations.

In what has been examined so far, the narrators employ the dwarfs as catalysts for the 'foolish' challenging of the norm, in order to question the central ideals of chivalry and courtesy established in Chrétien's narrative universe. While these ideals were still the impetus of the plot for Chrétien, they are now unmasked as mere stylization and are presented to enhance the ridiculous element. Fool-like behaviour aims to question reputed ideals. The questioning of these ideals functions through parody, that is to say through the inversion of ideals or through their breaking. Through the burlesque dwarf scenes which denude or at least render fragile the classical scenes and constellation of ideals they allude to, the reader becomes aware that these ideals are not valid anymore.

Through the parody of ideals that constitute the Arthurian romance, such as *chevalerie* and *courtoisie*, 'Arthurian Romance' as genre is itself brought into question. Post-Chrétien Arthurian romances have several dwarfs who disregard and parody the 'rules of the game', that is to say the 'classical' romances (Chrétien's romances), through their fool-like behaviour. *Le Roman de Fergus*, for example, confronts the problem of achieving suspense in rewritings of well-known Chrétien

[11] See on the topos Emmanuèle Baumgartner, 'Des Femmes et des Chiens', in *De l'histoire de Troie au livre du Graal: le temps, le récit (XII^e–XIII^e siècles)* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1994), pp. 325–33. Cf. Patrizia Mazzadi in this volume on Tristan's comparison between Isolde's faithfulness and that of his dog.

romances, drawing a distinct parallel between the behaviour of fool and dwarf, by assigning them the same function vis-à-vis the protagonist. In the case of *Bel Inconnu* and *Méraugis de Portlesquez*, it can be demonstrated that the Arthurian code is no longer applicable. Dwarf and master reflect on the literary model of Arthurian conventions, which in turn makes readers aware that Arthurian romance is no more than fiction.

The Ironical Treatment of Fiction

Alongside the parodic imitation of Chrétien's episodes, in *Le Roman de Fergus* Guillaume le Clerc is searching for a way out of the dilemma in which post-Chrétien authors find themselves. In view of the great popularity of the Arthurian romance, and therewith the predictable plot of every Arthurian romance, the narrator in Fergus must find an innovative way to catch the reader's attention. The narrator therefore does not concentrate on the story itself, but rather on the handling of the familiar matter (*matière*). Subsequently, the content of the story loses its importance, while the telling of the story in a new way becomes the focal point. Guillaume le Clerc finds one solution in the figures of a fool and a dwarf. Similarly, with regard to the character of Yvain in Chrétien's *Chevalier au lion*, the narrator leaves Fergus to ride through the forest for a year in a state of madness: haggard, unwashed, wearing torn clothes, with long hair, and an empty stomach (line 3664) — and lovelorn, on top of everything else! — he stumbles upon a magical fountain just as Yvain does (*Yvain*, line 3490). This fountain is, as is typical, adorned with precious stones, and without fail, is the site of a chapel (lines 3702–04). In contrast to Yvain, who with one look at the source is reminded of his anguish again and begins to lament, Fergus succeeds in regaining his confidence by drinking from the source, and as a result forgets his grief (line 3725). Whereas in *Yvain* Lunette, the maid, is to be found in the chapel, in *Fergus* it is a dwarf: 'uns nains le garde' (line 3706; it is watched over by a dwarf). The dwarf recognizes Fergus immediately, addresses him by his name, and knows that he is in search of the adored Galïene. The dwarf is in fact able to predict the future. By being able to predict Fergus's future, he anticipates a considerable part of the romance: Fergus should head to Dunostre Castle, where he should fight against a ghastly old woman and steal her shiny shield, rendering him invincible. These adventures consequently occur just as they have been predicted. When the dwarf explains to Fergus that his possession of the shield will protect him from any future harm ('Ja par armes ne perdra vie', line 3840; He will never lose his life through weapons), it

becomes clear that everything will turn out well and, after many an adventure, Fergus will marry his beloved. As a result, the dwarf foretells the end of the romance, and any suspense is removed. This, however, is not problematic. The stories about Arthur's court are sufficiently well known through the reading of Chrétien. The dwarf may therefore predict the end of the romance as the reader is not particularly interested in what the narrative has to unfold, but rather in the way in which it is presented in contrast to Chrétien's version.[12]

It is not only the dwarf in *Fergus* that predicts future events and outcomes. He is in good company, firstly, with the fool who at the beginning predicts Fergus's adventure with the Noir Chevalier and the winning of the horn and pennant (line 1400) and, secondly, with the narrator himself (e.g. line 3690). The premonitions of the fool, the dwarf, and the narrator suggest to the reader from the beginning of the scene that Fergus's fortune will improve. Dwarf, fool, and narrator refer accordingly to the principal idea of the romance: as the audience already know what will happen, the end may also be predicted, without making the romance boring. The suspense of the romance results from the way in which Guillaume tells a well-known old story in a new way by using typical motifs, allusions, and reversals. The narrator in *Fergus* thereby demonstrates to what extent the romance relies on literary convention. The fool and dwarf support the narrator in questioning the Arthurian genre through their comical alienation, that is to say their parody.

Renaut de Beaujeu's *récriture* in *Bel Inconnu* has often been considered as playing with the typical motifs and scenes of Chrétien's romances.[13] Bauschke argues that by partially citing traditional elements, the author succeeds in fulfilling the readers' expectations; however a moment later the reader is disappointed due to a new combination of these elements. The partially cited Chrétien subject matter

[12] See D. D. R. Owen, 'The Craft of Guillaume Le Clerc's *Fergus*', in *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics*, ed. by Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester: Solaris, 1984), pp. 47–81 (p. 69); also *La Chevalerie des sots: Le Roman de Fergus, Trubert, fabliau du XII^e siècle*, trans. by Romaine Wolf-Bonvin (Paris: Stock, 1990), p. 18.

[13] See, for example, Renaud de Beaujeu, *Le Bel Inconnu*, ed. by Michèle Perret, trans. by Michèle Perret and Isabelle Weill (Paris: Champion, 2003), p. viii; Emmanuèle Baumgartner, 'Féerie-Fiction: *le Bel Inconnu* de Renaut de Beaujeu', in *Le Chevalier et la merveille dans le Bel Inconnu ou le beau jeu de Renaut*, ed. by Jean Dufournet (Paris: Champion, 1996), pp. 7–21; Francis Dubost, 'Le "Beau Jeu" de Renaut avec le Merveilleux', in ibid., pp. 23–56; Peter Haidu, 'Realism, Convention, Fictionality and the Theory of Genres in *Le Bel Inconnu*', *L'Esprit créateur*, 12 (1972), 37–60 (p. 43); and Ricarda Bauschke, 'Auflösung des Artusromans und Defiktionalisierung im *Bel Inconnu*: Renaut de Beaujeus Auseinandersetzung mit Chrétien de Troyes', in *Fiktionalität im Artusroman*, ed. by Volker Mertens and Friedrich Wolfzettel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), pp. 84–116.

and motifs undergo such a parodic reinterpretation that they ultimately aim to deconstruct the genre.

In her essay, Bauschke explores the dwarf Tidogolain, and I shall take her approach and analysis further. In creating the dwarf Tidogolain, Renaut is evidently playing on the initial adventure of *Erec*. In the same manner as Chrétien does, Renaut introduces the dwarf into a trio with the noble maiden Helie and a knight, namely Bel Inconnu, and together they ride through the world of the romance. Renaut converts the malicious knight Yder from antagonist to protagonist. Like Chrétien, he has the dwarf and maiden appear at the beginning of the romance, in order to initiate the adventure of Bel Inconnu. Renaut then causes the outlined parallel motifs to break down abruptly, as he does not reduce the dwarf Tidogolian to a grotesque being unworthy of the court, as Chrétien does, but allows him to shine in courtly perfection. Renaut refers to the dwarf scene in *Erec* down to the last detail in order to invert everything: Yder's dwarf was 'de felenie [...] plains' (line 164; full of malice), Tidogolain is 'preu' (line 615; brave), 'debonaire' (line 498; generous), 'cortois et bien apris' (line 159; well brought up according to the standards of the court). Where Yder's dwarf hit Erec and the maiden with his horsewhip, Tidogolin merely needs his *corgie* (whip) in order to urge his horse on (lines 167–68, 2489). As opposed to Yder's dwarf who refuses to give any information, Tidogolain is ready to serve Bel Inconnu right from the start ('li nains molt biel li *aidoit*', line 944; the dwarf helped him a lot). The excellently dressed dwarf is prudent and adopts a humane posture which does not falter at any moment. Moreover, the narrator, in gentle tones, mocks the peaceful dwarf, who no longer wishes to engage in any chivalrous behaviour. For example, he will not even participate in knightly combat ('De l'aprocier n'avoit pas soing', line 823; he doesn't look forward to approching the battle). The narrator here plays on the dwarf's cowardice. Tidogolain equally resembles a maiden, when he cries and tears at his hair at the pain of Guinglain's departure for the *Gaste Cité*.[14]

The parodical intention can already be seen in the reinterpretation of the dwarf. The parody lies in Renaut's distinct play on Chrétien's trios, which are then changed in order to deliberately disorientate the reader. The dwarf Tidogolain nevertheless maintains one of the typical functions of the dwarf as a catalyst of the plot, and the narrator consequently reaches for the Arthurian model, whereby he destroys the fictional norms of the genre. The narrator of *Bel Inconnu* takes on Chrétien's formulation in order to place it in opposition to the Arthurian subtext.

[14] See, for example, Cadoc's wife in *Erec*, line 4333.

For example, he underlines that, unlike Yder's dwarf in Chrétien, Tidogolain '*n*'ert *pas* ne fols ne vilains' (line 158, my emphasis; is neither stupid nor vulgar). In this way, he demonstrates to the 'disappointed' reader that Chrétien's norms are concerned with imposed fictional norms, into which he may intervene at any moment as an autonomous narrator.

By treating fiction ironically the narrator even involves himself in the appraisal of the dwarf when he says: 'Cui *je* ne tien pas a vilain' (line 616, my emphasis; I do not think he is bad). The narrator's use of the personal pronoun *je* gives a special quality to the depiction of the dwarf. In *Bel Inconnu*, the narrator speaks in the first person when his aim is to underline the fictionality of the romance. For example, during the scene where Bel Inconnu and Belle aux Blanches Mains finally exchange their first kiss (line 4792), he explains that he cannot give any precise details as he was not there to see it (line 4815). With a wink the reader is made to understand that the book which is stated as being the source of the romance in the prologue (line 5) does not exist. The basis of the source becomes completely invalid when the narrator tells of the lovers' first night together and blends his own idea of love into the story. He makes it clear that this is fiction and that he can choose how his romance unfolds. When the narrator delivers a description of a dwarf which does not comply with the traditional stereotype and emphasizes that he does not consider the dwarf to be malicious, he is making clear to the reader that his romance is not structured by narrative conventions and imposed Arthurian motifs, but that the romance arises from his own capriciousness.

The metaleptic epilogue of *Bel Inconnu* turns the autonomous remodelling of the material into the theme itself.[15] In the prologue, Renaut already states his motive as being the love quest for his beloved and in the epilogue he explains what will happen later, and thereby puts Guinglain's destiny in the hands of the *amie*: her good will should decide whether Renaut continues to write his romance or whether he will end it here, and how and whom Guinglain will love in the future. By creating a dependency between inner (Guinglain/Belle Esmérée/Belle aux Blanches Mains) and outer narration (Renaut/*amie*), the narrator underlines the fictional condition of his work: the romance is subject to the capriciousness of the narrator and also his ladylove. The end of the romance will depend on the greeting

[15] See lines 6253–66. I use the expression *roman métaleptique* in Gérard Genette's definition, who understands it as an 'intrusion du narrateur ou du narrataire extradiégétique dans l'univers diégétique (ou de personnages diégétiques dans un univers métadiégétique, etc.), ou inversement': Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 244.

he receives from her that evening.[16] The proposed alternative to the end of the romance additionally suggests that the narrator can decide on the actual ending of the romance and is free to change it as he pleases. The variability of what can be told identifies the romance as fiction.[17] Whether and how the story should continue is dependent on no given source, neither the Arthurian stereotype nor Chrétien's narrative conventions, but only on the narrator himself. The *non-clotûre* of the text demonstrates that it is a pure fiction in which the narrator is free to intervene at his discretion.

The destiny of the protagonist in *Bel Inconnu* not only depends on the mood of the narrator and the protagonist's love interest, but is also influenced by all the characters in Guinglain's adventure. Perret speaks of the *maîtres de la diégèse* which, according to Genette, allow various instances in the narrative process to have an influence on the plot.[18] Even the dwarf appears on this list of *maîtres diégénétiques*, as he convinces Helie to at least give Bel Inconnu the chance to prove himself. As opposed to Helie, who does not trust this greenhorn to come to the rescue of her mistress Blonde Esmerée, Tidogolain refers to the fact that one can only condemn him who has lost a fight (line 307). The dwarf insists several times on the fact that Bel Inconnu should not be categorically declined, but judged according to his strengths and weaknesses. After Bel Inconnu has succeeded in proving his capabilities in his adventure against a giant, Tidogolain applauds the 'molt gran pris' of the knight insistently, and criticizes Helie for jumping to conclusions. From the metafictional point of view, Tidogolain's arguments in favour of Bel Inconnu prove to be an admonition to respect the rules of Arthurian romance. Respecting these rules in this case means respecting the *don contraignant*: Arthur can only keep his promise to Bel Inconnu if Helie gives Guinglain the

[16] Michèle Perret, 'Atemporalité et effet de fiction dans le *Bel Inconnu*', in *Le Nombre du temps: en hommage à Paul Zumthor*, ed. by Emmanuèle Baumgartner and others, Nouvelle bibliothèque du Moyen Âge, 12 (Paris: Champion; Geneva: Slatkine, 1988), pp. 225–35: 'Le roman métaleptique se caractérise, au contraire, par le fait que l'illusion mimétique y est dénoncé et que cette maîtrise de la diégèse est ouvertement revendiquée par l'auteur. [...] cette écriture [...] déconstruit toute vraisemblace de l'histoire narrée et qu'elle porte l'effet de fiction en soi' (p. 230).

[17] Concerning the epilogue, see Bauschke, 'Auflösung des Artusromans', p. 111.

[18] Perret, 'Atemporalité et effet de fiction', p. 231: 'j'appelle ainsi celui qui décide du déroulement des aventures d'un personnage de roman [...]. Ainsi toute l'aventure du bel inconnu, Guinglain, dépend non seulement de l'humeur du narrateur et de sa dame mais de la volonté de l'un des personnages'.

chance. Just as the narrator, Helie, Robert, Arthur, etc. do, the dwarf manipulates the story and therefore influences the destiny of Bel Inconnu.

Astoundingly, it is the words of the dwarf that make it possible to attribute an element of charitableness to Helie, and to change her mind. The reprimanding words of the dwarf are presented as recurring phrases — 'N'est a blamer quist a proissier' (line 492; one ought not blame someone who is admirable) — and impersonal, generalizing sentences: 'On ne doit ome blamer mie' (line 309; One may not blame anyone), 'Tel tient on' (line 311; One considers those to be), 'Tel cose tient on molt vivement | De coi on après se repent' (lines 837–38; The things that one criticize too much are the things that makes one repent all the more afterwards)', 'Mais n'i puet metre mecine' (line 839; But nobody can deny that). These aphoristic idioms aim to make judgements in a balanced, fair, and justified way, which allows the Arthurian court and its idealistic norms to appear on the horizon. The aphorisms give the impression that the romance is respecting the conventions of the genre. The dwarf, who no longer respects the Arthurian convention, is an example of the narrator's deconstruction of the Arthurian romance genre. However, in the next step the narrator deconstructs the dwarf as well, as this dwarf also serves as a reminder that Arthurian ideals should be respected.

Not only the dwarf, but the narrator too uses aphoristic sentences in *Bel Inconnu*, in standardized speech to remind the reader of the Arthurian conventions.[19] The parodic effect is intensified by the demonstration that fictional norms are fragile. Those who propagate the Arthurian norms in the use of a standardized speech are those who had not conformed to these norms. The dwarf and narrator both demand a certain behaviour from the characters which conforms to the model of Arthurian romance, despite the fact that they do not respect these norms themselves.

On different levels throughout the romance, the dwarf Tidogolain plays a role in the strategically programmed, ironical treatment of fiction. The trio surrounding the dwarf Tidogolain brings up traditional motifs for the Arthurian romance reader in order to dispossess them shortly afterwards. The narrator transcends the material, so that the reader is obliged to redefine his expectations. However, the narrator's next step is to turn the inversion around again, just as the dwarf, despite himself, begins to respect the Arthurian norm. His aphorisms, which make

[19] See lines 8, 771, 797, 915, 1076, 1245, 2169, 5395, and 5408. Other characters also use aphorisms, in order to refer back to this stereotypical behaviour: Helie (line 1029), le Seigneur de Saies (line 1221), Guinglain (lines 3115, 4677), Robert (lines 3815, 3824), Blanches Mains (line 4927).

reference to Arthurian norms through standardized speech, contribute to the parody. Renaut de Beaujeu's text resembles a funny game, a *Beau-Jeu*.[20] The object of this game is to hold on to Arthurian norms, but also to throw them overboard: a deconstructing game in which the dwarf Tidogolain plays his role.

Raoul de Houdenc's *Méraugis de Portlesquez* can be read in the same way as *Bel Inconnu*, as a 'fool-like' commentary and criticism of Chrétien's romance universe.[21] In this romance, the acceptance and the refusal of the great master's *matière* is discussed. Raoul's characters often find themselves in contexts typical of the *matière de Bretagne*, such as the sparrowhawk prize, the search for Gauvain, and confrontation with dwarfs. These either conform to or resist the conventions of the genre. The dwarf scenes demonstrate which constellations Raoul de Houdenc chooses to discard from Chrétien's universe, and to what extent he expects something new from Arthurian romance.

The romance begins with an unusual scene in which Meraugis and his friend Gorvain are arguing about the inner and outer beauty of Lidoine. After Guinièvre and her maidens have decided in favour of Meraugis, and therefore on inner beauty, the *nain camus* (the dwarf with a flat nose) appears for the first time (lines 1244–1375) in order to remind everyone that the knight Gauvain has not returned within his year of departure. The dwarf reprimands the court for thinking that the oldest knight's return may have been prevented by an accident. When he asks who would come to the knight's rescue, the other knights remain astoundingly reserved. Only Meraugis offers to help, as he has been put to the test by Lidoine: he may marry her before the end of the year if he 'does what a knight is expected to do for his lady' ('s'il fet ce q'a chevalier | afiert a fere por s'amie', lines 1104–05). In this way, he can appear as a hero and distinguish himself from the established heroes. Nevertheless, the passivity on the part of others and their lack of concern regarding Gauvain's failure to return throw a bad light on the Arthurian court, which is already some distance from the ideal of Chrétien's court. By closely reading the tale, one can identify a clue behind Lidoine's words, 's'il fet ce q'a chevalier | afiert a fere por s'amie': Lidoine wants to verify whether Meraugis behaves in the way that she and the audience expect of the heroes of Arthurian romances.

The Arthurian framework is broadened, and can be filled by the dwarf's challenge to ride out on an adventure. As in *Erec*, the pair set off together, running after

[20] Dubost engages in wordplay in the title of his essay 'Le "Beau Jeu" de Renaut avec le Merveilleux' (p. 23).

[21] Raoul de Houdenc, *Meraugis de Portlesquez: Roman arthurien du XIII^e siècle*, ed. and trans. by Michelle Szkilnik (Paris: Champion, 2004).

the dwarf who refuses to give them any further information. Momentarily, they lose him, as in Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charette* (line 354). His reappearance without his horse, which an old woman has taken away from him, is impetus for Raoul's humorous remark that the dwarf's short legs hinder him in being able to advance quickly in the snow (line 1394). The dwarf begs Meraugis to bring him his horse back. The old woman's attempt to hit Meraugis with the bridle she has taken from the dwarf's horse signals to the reader a parodic analogue to *Erec*: instead of being confronted by a maiden and a dwarf as happens to Erec and Yder, Meraugis stumbles upon an ugly, old woman, who tries to attack the hero with the dwarf's leather belt. The old woman promises Meraugis the dwarf's horse if he takes a shield from the tree and throws it on the ground. The confirmed Arthurian reader, as well as the knight who conforms to the expectations of the Arthurian romance, would be aware of the danger immediately, but not Meraugis. He has no 'experience of literature' and behaves differently from his predecessors such as Erec and Yvain. Without hesitation or mention of the usual concerns, Meraugis fulfils the old woman's request and takes down the shield. His choice of action is of course wrong: he does get the horse back, but has however caused immense sadness amongst the maidens in the tent by taking down the shield. Fierce complaints become louder, and Lidoine, who possesses the 'experience of literature' mentioned above, joins the maidens in their complaints. Meraugis on the other hand, does not understand at all: 'por qoi plorez?' (line 1533; Why are you crying?), 'Comment, a il dont tel meffet?' (line 1541; 'What? Is it that bad?'), he asks, and he believes he can repair the situation quickly ('c'est legier a amender', line 1544), by hanging the shield up again. Meraugis has no idea what he has done wrong (line 1555) and asks the maidens to explain. When they refuse to do so and make fun of him, Meraugis angrily throws the shield to the ground again. The repeated misdoing underlines that Meraugis is completely ignorant of the dos and don'ts of Arthurian literature. He naïvely rides through the Arthurian literary landscapes, without understanding their norms and habits. This also explains why, throughout the whole romance, Meraugis is constantly asking why? and what for? during his adventures. In contrast to the reader, he does not know anything about the conventions of the romance nor of the Arthurian rules.

Consequently, Meraugis does not understand why, upon the dwarf's third appearance, he becomes the dwarf's defender during the joust at King Amangon's court. In the forest, the dwarf blocks Meraugis's way and challenges him to a fight. At the king's court, the dwarf presents Meraugis as his knight, who will fight for him against the proud knight (line 2235). Meraugis slowly begins to understand that he has fallen into the dwarf's trap, and does not know how to get out of it.

Or sui ge fols!
Voire, li nains me tient sanz faille,
Quant il por vaintre sa bataille
M'a presenté devant cest roi,
Si ne sai a qui ne por qoi,
Non! (*Méraugis de Portlesquez*, lines 2257–62)

[Now I am really mad, the dwarf has tricked me by presenting me to the king as his defender in this fight. I don't even know with whom I am supposed to fight and why.]

It turns out that Meraugis does not even understand the main role of the knight, that is to say the adventure, when he asks himself how he managed to get himself into the awkward situation of defending the dwarf. As Meraugis does not know what the point of his mission is, the fight has turned into an Arthurian motif which has no purpose. Furthermore, Raoul has created the scene to be a parody of the opening scene in *Erec*; the trio of knight, malicious dwarf, and court-like maiden are translated into the grotesque once again. Instead of presenting a dwarf who hits, the dwarf gets hit repeatedly (lines 1425, 1454, 2418). Rather than being accompanied by a sweet maiden, the knight gets a *naine camuse*. The dwarf loves her, but she is denied to him by the knight.

Meraugis obviously defeats his opponent and, as he is unaware of Arthurian conventions, would have killed him, were it not for the king who intervenes and declares him the winner. He is granted the privilege to give away the maidens in marriage to the knights who are present. Meraugis does not know what to make of the situation and makes the others aware of this (line 2316). Astonished, the king asks if he does not know the reasons to celebrate with a feast, and explains to him what is habitual at his court: 'Il a toz jors *coustumé* esté ...' (line 2327; It has always been custom ...). Meraugis clearly ignores this. It is often stated in the tale that Meraugis does not know, is not aware of, does not understand. He neither knows the Arthurian customs nor sees the point of bringing the absurdity of the Arthurian code into play: by ignoring the customs, the problem of Arthurian automatisms and romance conventions becomes apparent. The Arthurian world in Chrétien's style follows strictly imposed models with which the knights comply, in beauty contests, when duelling, and on adventures. The maidens, while waiting for their redeemers, and the dwarfs, as plot initiators, for example, also comply. The constrained Arthurian conventions have already affected the structure of *Méraugis de Portlesquez*, which is expressed through the chain of events: as Meraugis wants to help the dwarf to get his horse back, he encourages the anger of the old woman; as he tries to calm the old woman down, he stimulates the rage of the Outredotés; as he tries to justify himself to them, his messenger loses an eye; as Meraugis must

seek revenge for this, he pursues Outredoté; as he rides past the castle of Amangon on this chase, the dwarf uses Meraugis once again for his services; and so on. The constraint of Arthurian conventions is also demonstrated in *Méraugis de Portlesquez*, in that the tale must introduce the Arthurian code to the protagonist at the beginning of each adventure, making it clear to the reader that the Arthurian code functions as a norm created by fiction. However, the tale does not let Meraugis fail due to his lack of knowledge regarding the Arthurian world of narration. The romance gives the protagonists — especially the dwarf — the opportunity to escape from Arthurian automatism by being cunning!

From the start, the dwarf's cunning is apparent as he proceeds to secure Meraugis as his defender. To dispose of the dishonour he has suffered (the proud knight hit him on his flat nose in front of the king, preventing his marriage to the *naine camuse*), the dwarf is obliged to find a knight to defend him, whose chivalry forbids him to deny the dwarf's request. The knights at the court are tired of fighting. Nobody wants to fight for the dwarf: even they cannot stand the Arthurian automatism anymore. If the dwarf wants to find someone to defend him, he needs to find another solution, namely craftiness. The dwarf hereby makes clear that craftiness is often more effective than *chevalerie*. Meraugis is the target of the dwarf's cunning. With the threat that Meraugis should be shamed ('honte', line 2153) rather than glorified ('onor', line 2152) if he does not help him, the dwarf may use him for whatever purpose he may have. So that Meraugis does not begin to have doubts, the dwarf confuses him at the court by never answering his questions and always finding a way around them. When he asks whether the fight with the proud knight was promised by the dwarf, the dwarf answers 'he is not ready to agree to other arrangements, as he is worried that Meraugis will be glorified' (line 2267). The narrator comments on the dwarf's linguistic sophistication, which has already been demonstrated in his comment on Keue's mockery at the Arthurian court (line 1366). His verbal craftiness, the narrator remarks, consists in his answering a question that has not been asked, rather than answering Meraugis's question:

> Oez quel traïson adite
> Li nains, que quant on li oppose
> D'un, il respont d'une autre chose. (*Méraugis de Portlesquez*, lines 2271–73)

[Note the cunningness of the dwarf who gives a reply that does not correspond to the question he has been asked!]

The dwarf uses deceit in order to reach his goal, as Meraugis can no longer fight back without looking like a coward. A joust ensues, Meraugis wins, and the dwarf can now grant him his wish, to be allowed to marry the *naine camuse*.

Previously, the dwarf was able to insist upon Meraugis's taking the horse from the old woman, by threatening to dishonour him. Likewise, the old lady was able to wrap him around her little finger and he was obliged to remove the shield. Step by step, Meraugis learns how to reach his own goals through deceit. The dwarf has fooled him, but the dwarf's task is done so he does not appear in subsequent adventures. The second half of the romance sees Meraugis master his own resourcefulness, achieving his goals by trickery, with *engine*, such as pretending to be dead (line 3226), by disguising himself (line 3299), and by lying (line 5706). The cunning hero has understood that chivalry and the use of weapons do not suffice. With *chevalerie* alone, one does not progress sufficiently. In fact, it can often be the cause of *honte*, of which the dwarf has warned him on several occasions.

Initially, the *nain camus* appears to be a Chrétien imitation: Raoul demonstrates a dwarf which at first refuses any information to the hero (lines 1244, 1296, 1511) and is described in detail as an ugly and wicked figure (lines 1246, 1510, 2143, 2402). However, it is afterwards revealed that the dwarf is not wicked at all, and even has royal blood (line 2441). He guides the hero to a way in which he can break through the Arthurian automatism of the romance tradition. The *nain camus* already has an awareness of the problematic situations in the post-Chrétien romance. Raoul de Houdenc's character contradicts the literary conventions of the genre: in the dwarf scenes, Raoul questions the Arthurian stereotype and lets the dwarf couple become the *mise en abîme* of the beauty contest. With the contest between Gorvain and Meraugis as to whether Lidoine should be loved for her inner or outer beauty, Raoul expounds the problem of the established 'physiognomic equation: ugly equals bad and beautiful equals good'. Gorvain loves Lidoine for her beauty alone, and even the worst characteristics could not prevent him from adoring her. Meraugis loves Lidoine because of her courtly manner, and even if she were ugly, he would love her for her inner virtues. Through the minor characters, the author exemplifies Meraugis and Gorvain's discussion, as well as the problem of the queen and her women in the court.[22] The ugly old woman was once beautiful, but now only her ugliness is left: the beauty disappears, but her wicked character remains — the first disproof of Gorvain's theory. For the *nain* and *naine camuse* it is the opposite. Due to their short and flat noses, introduced as *camuse chose*, they become quickly familiar with the discourse of the court, allowing the reader to learn of their noble descent. The dwarf couple is ugly on the outside, but virtuous

[22] Ronald M. Spensley, 'The Theme of *Meraugis de Portlesquez*', *French Studies*, 27 (1973), 129–33 (p. 131).

on the inside, and therefore advocates Meraugis's position.[23] The minor characters invert the norms of the physiognomic equation. At the end of the romance Lidoine develops a burning love for Meraugis, who has become hideously ugly (line 4900), discrediting once more Gorvain's theory. The portrayal of the discrepancy between inner and outer forms of appearance aims to deconstruct the literary conventions of Arthurian romance.

The *nain camus* in *Méraugis de Portlesquez* breaks from the conventions of the genre on several levels: first, normally an ugly dwarf would be ill behaved, yet this one is well behaved. Additionally, this dwarf becomes Meraugis's initiator in the use of deceit. Neither of these roles are compatible with the norms of the Arthurian romance. Furthermore, the aims of the dwarf stray completely from the Arthurian norm: no other romance has a female dwarf who wants to marry another dwarf. Similar to the dwarfs in *Jaufré* and the dwarf Tidogolain in *Bel Inconnu*, the *nain camus* is also an ambivalent figure. The dwarf works against the conventions of the Arthurian romance; however he does this by using the categories of Arthurian romance: he constantly evokes the irruptive *honte*, and bribes with the promise of *honor*. He also diligently fulfils the role of plot initiator, though in order to train Meraugis to become a cunning hero. The reader laughs at the shrewd ideas of the ugly dwarf.

The conflict of the dwarf's role with Chrétien's world of narration can be identified by the reader as a conflict of genres, or an internal conflict within the genre. The changes in the creation of the dwarf image which we find in Raoul's text, in comparison to Chrétien, aim to underline the problematic issue of the Arthurian romance genre from a metafictional point of view.

Conclusion

The post-Chrétien Arthurian verse tales that this article has analysed employ dwarfs as central characters in order to reconsider the narrative conventions of the Arthurian romance that were established as supreme ideals at the time of Chrétien's works. The gestures and voices of the dwarfs create moments in which the romances reflect the concepts of the genre on a metafictional level. The dwarfs

[23] Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, '*Camuse Chose*: Das Häßliche als ästhetisches und menschliches Problem in der altfranzösischen Literatur', in *Die Mächte des Guten und Bösen: Vorstellungen im XII. und XIII. Jahrhundert über ihr Wirken in der Heilsgeschichte*, ed. by Albert Zimmermann, Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 11 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), pp. 442–52 (p. 450).

hereby take on 'fool-like' characteristics through which they challenge the established norms of the genre and render them fragile or even damage them. The parallels between dwarf and fool are drawn directly in the *Roman de Fergus*. In Guillaume Le Clerc's romance, both figures ridicule the Arthurian stories which always unfold in the same way. By summarizing the plot in advance, the suspense of the romance is removed; this is done in order to mock the degree of popularity of this genre. In the Old Provençal romance *Jaufré*, the break with chivalrous tasks is taken into consideration in the dwarf scenes. In *La Vengeance Raguidel* the posing gestures of the dwarfs mock the concept of courtly love, proving it to be literary stylization. Through the parody of the ideals *chevalerie* and *courtoisie*, the genre is criticized, so that Arthurian Romance begins to falter. In *Méraugis de Portlesquez* and in *Bel Inconnu*, the constrained nature of Arthurian norms is demonstrated through the gestures and, even more, through the words of the dwarfs: the norms become inadequate as the conventions of the genre are applied. The Arthurian code is exposed as a conglomeration of crippling norms that can only be overcome by playing with fiction.

The parody of the genre proves to be a complex procedure as the dwarfs demonstrate the limitations of the genre conventions while they maintain them. The dwarfs consequently double their 'fool-like' potential when they then question the parody of the genre that they have just created. In this way, the reader is completely destabilized and is obliged to reconsider his or her expectations created by Arthurian norms.

The Issue of Madness in Tristan Romances

Patrizia Mazzadi

If by madness we mean the inability to understand the world according to common sense, namely 'the plain wisdom which is everyone's inheritance' (*OED*, s.v.), madness can lead to situations of misinterpretation, including the possibility that the mad person is not understood by others. For this reason, many literary texts through the ages have made use of the narrative potential of madness. Antiquity is acquainted with two types of madness, simulated and real, both predicated on behaviour. The most famous case of simulation is certainly that of Odysseus, who in his pretended madness sows salt on the beach of Ithaca in order to avoid sailing to the Trojan war. Other examples outline the brutal effects that can be brought on by madness: Ajax, in desperation for not having received Achilles' armour, slaughters the cattle that were to feed the Greek army and kills himself when, in a moment of sanity, he is horrified by his own atrocity. Madness is sometimes induced by the gods, who darken the minds of men as a punishment. There are many examples, the most well known being Heracles, Alcinoe, Phrixus and Helle, Athamas and Ino, and Lycurgus.

A reaction to seeing madness in another can be laughter but equally it may be that the mad person conceals behind an enigmatic laugh their inability to understand. The attitude to laughter in the Middle Ages is ambivalent. On the one hand, laughter was not approved of by the Church, according to which Jesus Christ never laughed. On the other hand, laughter could have a positive meaning, for instance when it appeared as a sign of healthy merriness as opposed to *tristizia*, a melancholic feeling affecting devout men with paralysing effects.[1] Hartmann von Aue and Wolfram von Eschenbach embrace humour and merriness in their narratives, while these concepts are totally alien to Gottfried von Straßburg. When, in

[1] Cf. Max Wehrli, *Literatur im deutschen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987), p. 178.

Wolfram's *Parzival*, Cunneware laughs for the first time after six years at the sight of the eponymous hero, it is taken as a good omen.[2]

In the late Middle Ages, it became more frequent to be entertained by people pretending to be foolish or jesting. Nevertheless, entertainment maintains the ancient Roman role of reflecting the transitory essence of glory and worldly wealth.[3] With Humanism and the Renaissance there is an attempt to counteract violence and threats with humour, as demonstrated in the works of Boccaccio and Ariosto, in their ironic approach to issues which were still regarded as serious in courtly literature. Adultery at a king's expense would never be portrayed as ridiculous in courtly romances, because the ruler represents absolute power, royal violence, and the dangers connected with it. Tristan's death in *Tristan en Prose* is a case in point: King Mark slays him when he finds him in the Queen's apartments singing a *lai*.

> Mesire Tristrans estois dersarmés, si que li rois le feri mortelment par mi la quisse, et quant li rois ot fait cestui caup, il s'em parti, car il n'osa monsigneur Tristran atendre. (*Tristan en Prose*, IX, 188)[4]
>
> [Sir Tristan was unarmed, so the King mortally wounded him on the thigh, and after having inflicted this wound the King quickly departed, because he did not dare to wait for Sir Tristan.]

This essay analyses how Tristan in a variety of texts represents simulated madness and real insanity, in order to outline how the development of the concept of madness indicates an evolution in the concepts of 'the knight' and 'love'. The following versions will be analysed: Eilhart's *Tristrant und Isalde* (*c.* 1170–90); the *Folie Tristan de Berne* and *Folie Tristan d'Oxford* (both end of the twelfth century); the *Roman de Tristan par Thomas* (*c.* 1180); Brother Robert's *Tristan* (1226); the continuations of Gottfried's *Tristan* by Ulrich von Türheim (first half of the thirteenth century) and by Heinrich von Freiberg (end of the thirteenth century); *Sir Tristrem* (*c.* 1291); the *Roman de Tristan en prose* (after 1230 or the second half of the thirteenth century); *Tristano Riccardiano* and *Tristano Veneto* (both end of the thirteenth century); and *Tavola Ritonda* (first half of the fourteenth century). In

[2] Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival, mittelhochdeutscher Text nach der Ausgabe von K. Lachmann, Übers. und Nachwort von W. Spiewok*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), book 3. 151, lines 7–21.

[3] Emperors celebrating their victories had a crippled and hideous slave follow them in order to represent the impermanent character of their own glory: *sic transit gloria mundi*.

[4] Quotations by volume and by page from *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*, ed. by Philippe Ménard, 9 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1987–97); here vol. IX: *Le Fin des Aventures de Tristan et de Galaad*, ed. by Laurence Harf-Lancner (1997). Translations are my own.

the various versions of Tristan's story we find episodes both of faked madness, such as that adopted by the knight in order to see Isolde again, and of true madness, such as the one experienced by Tristan in the forest of Morois. As we shall see, these have different interpretative implications.

In Tristan's earlier versions, simulated madness is a common feature. It is to be found in Eilhart's *Tristrant*, and in the much shorter Berne *Folie* and Oxford *Folie*,[5] in the continuations by Ulrich von Türheim and by Heinrich von Freiberg of the incomplete version by Gottfried von Straßburg,[6] and in a version of *Tristan en Prose* dating from the end of the fifteenth century.[7] Both versions of the *Folie* begin and end at the same point. Critics have not yet established which author influenced the other, whereas it seems now certain that the writer of Berne used Béroul and the writer of Oxford used Thomas.[8] In Eilhart's version, Tristan's madness is the last of four types of disguise by means of which Tristan reaches the Queen.[9] His idea to play the madman comes from his dramatic change of physical appearance, his loss of weight, loss of hair resulting from a serious injury, as well as from the advice given to him by his nephew, not mentioned in other versions. Tristan dresses up as a madman and goes to the harbour where his behaviour catches the attention of a merchant who decides to take him to court to amuse the King and Queen:

> allain gieng der kün man,
> deß in nicht verdroß.
> ain kolb gar groß

[5] Jean Renart quotes the *Folie* in his *Lai de l'ombre*: lines 124–25: 'Tristrans, qui fu a force | tondus comme fols por Yseut' (Tristan, who has his head shaved like a madman's for the sake of Isolde). See Fabrizio Cigni, 'Tristano e Isotta nelle letterature francese e italiana', in *Tristano e Isotta: La fortuna di un mito europeo*, ed. by Michael Dallapiazza (Trieste: Parnaso, 2003), pp. 29–126 (p. 71).

[6] The source is probably also in this case Eilhart's version, but critics do not exclude the possible existence of a French text gone missing; see Michael Dallapiazza, 'Tristano e Isotta nella letteratura tedesca', in *Tristano e Isotta*, ed. by Dallapiazza, pp. 130–45 (pp. 141–44).

[7] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 103; see Cigni, 'Tristano e Isotta nelle letterature francese e italiana', p. 75.

[8] Allusions and episodes hint at a French source, now lost, for the Berne *Folie*. See Joseph Bédier, *Les Deux Poèmes de la folie* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907; repr. New York: Johnson Reprint, 1965), p. 83; and Cesare Segre, 'Preistoria delle Folie Tristan', in *Le Roman de Tristan: Le maschere di Béroul. Atti del seminario di Verona, 14–15 maggio 2001*, ed. by Rosanna Brusegan, special issue, *Medioevo Romanzo*, 25 (2001), 165–80.

[9] He first disguises himself as a leper, then as a pilgrim and as a wayfarer.

truog er gar sicherlich.
von dannen huob er sich
und kam do hin geschlichen
zuo allen den schiffen,
die da kurnwälsch wavren.
torlich begund er gebavren:
under in er so lang umb gieng,
zuo letst in ain kouffman vieng,
der von Tÿntaniol wz.
der in do zuo im laß
und wolt inn gern bringen
siner frovwen der künginen
und sinem herren dem künge. (Eilhart, lines 8926–41)[10]

[The daring man went to the harbour alone carrying a big baton, stealthily approached all the ships that were from Cornwall and started to act like a fool, moved around the ships until a merchant from Tyntaniol caught him and took him with him with the idea of bringing him to his lady the queen and his lord the king.]

During the voyage he entertains the crew with his jokes:

ich sag úch wärlich:
er tavtt also torlich
in dem schiff und so gebaurt
der herr so hart
dick gund lachen
mit siner torhait machen.
sÿe jachen, sin gelich möcht nit leben. (Eilhart, lines 8945–51)

[I tell you truly that the nobleman behaved so foolishly on the ship and he began to laugh a lot as part of his doing foolish things. The sailors said they had never seen the like of him.]

Laughter is part of Tristan's performance, and the audience react with wonder.

In Cornwall, Tristan convinces everybody with his hoaxes, and the knights enjoy themselves at his expense:

Do kamen sie aun schaden
wol über zuo den gestaden
gen Tÿntaniol zuo dem land:
do funden sÿe uff dem sand
küng Marcken ritten.
sÿe do nicht bitten in den zitten:
den tovren bravchten sie im savn.

[10] Eilhart von Oberge, *Tristrant und Isalde*, ed. by Danielle Buschinger and Wolfgang Spiewok, GAG, 436 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1986). English translations are my own.

er waß so äffenlich getavn
und hett sölich gebavr,
sÿe wonden, er wär
gewÿßlich ainer tovren.
sÿe zugen in bÿ den ovren
und begunden manig spil:
deß vertruog er in ovch vil. (Eilhart, lines 8961–74)

[Having arrived safely at Tintaniol, they found King Mark riding on the coast and immediately they brought him the madman, who looked like a monkey and had such behaviour that they thought he really was mad. They started pulling his ears and started many games which he tolerated willingly.]

The simulation of madness is convincing for two reasons: on the one hand, the behaviour of the fool and, on the other hand, his toleration of the audiences' aggressive response. In these two situations, on the ship and on land, there are two different responses to foolish behaviour; neither is laughter. The entrance into court is similar. Tristan continues to act a madman, and everybody follows him to participate in his foolish deeds:

do rait der küng uff den hoff.
der tovr lieff im navch.
sin kolben er hovch truog.
affenwÿß begieng er gnuog
und manig torlich spil. (Eilhart, lines 8991–95)

[The king rode to the court and the fool ran after him, wielding his baton. He did many apish and foolish games.]

Tristan amuses the court with his pranks and, making the most of his position, spends the nights with the Queen:

Nun waß dem toren gar wol:
den tag waß er torhait vol,
deß nachtß er zuo der frowen kam. (Eilhart, lines 9134–36)

[The madman was really glad: during the day he acted crazily while at night he went to the queen.]

By this stratagem he manages to be in Isolde's company for three weeks, but at the price of great melancholic isolation. When, eventually, the servants realize the intimacy between the two and set a trap, Tristan anticipates their moves, takes his leave, and escapes.[11]

[11] In Ulrich it is Isolde who has the idea of the disguise and suggests it to him; there is therefore no tension about the Queen's recognition of Tristan. Mark goes hunting for two weeks and the

In the Berne *Folie* Mark is furious with his nephew who has marred his honour.[12] Tristan cannot return to Cornwall and pines for the distant Queen, continuously wondering what to do. Urged by his passion, he decides to pretend to be a madman. Altered in his appearance, he accepts his role as an object of jokes of whomsoever he encounters:

> Tondrë a fait sa bloie crine;
> N'i a un sol en la marine
> Qui ne croie que ce soit rage,
> Mais ne sevent pas son corage.
> En sa main porte une maçue,
> Comme fous va, chascuns lo hue,
> Gitant li pierres a la teste. (Berne *Folie*, lines 130–36)
>
> [He cut off his blond hair.
> Everyone on the coast
> Was convinced he was mad,
> But no one knew what was in his heart.
> He went like a madman, carrying a club,
> And everyone jeered at him
> And threw stones at his head.][13]

As in Eilhart's version, the response to a fool is aggressive.

At Mark's court, he tells the King part of his story. This irritates the King who orders him to be silent; ashamed, Queen Isolde also does not speak. Mark curses the madman, and Tristan, addressing the Queen, openly offends the King by referring

two lovers are alone, but Tristan is found out and has to escape, leaving several victims behind, together with whom Mark wants to bury Isolde alive in order to get his revenge; luckily his court calms him. In Heinrich we again find Eilhart's approach: instead of a wounded head Tristan has been so ill that his appearance has changed; it is Tantrisel the page, and not his nephew, who suggests taking advantage of this change and adopting the disguise of the madman in order to reach Isolde. At court Tristan behaves as a madman, hitting and punching. Tantrisel the page reveals to Isolde his real identity; she then recognizes him and tells him so with a glance. Mark goes hunting; Tristan remains at court for about ten days, is found out, takes leave, kills the knight who is pursuing him, then is pursued by Mark, who has finally understood the treachery behind the name Peilnetosi = Isoten liep ('loved by Isolde', author's note), without success; Tristan finally escapes to Bretagne.

[12] On *Folie*, see Cigni, 'Tristano e Isotta nelle letterature francese e italiana', pp. 59–63; Arianna Punzi, *Tristano: Storia di un mito* (Rome: Carocci, 2005), pp. 105–13.

[13] Text and translation from *La Folie Tristan (Berne)*, ed. and trans. by Samuel N. Rosenberg, in *Early French Tristan Poems*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, 2 vols, Arthurian Archives (Cambridge: Brewer, 1998), I, 222–56.

to him as a cuckold (Berne *Folie*, line 217). When finally, in her apartments, she understands the truth, Isolde falls at Tristan's feet, pleading to be forgiven for her doubts (lines 533–39). The story ends with Tristan taking the Queen in his arms.

In the *Folie Tristan d'Oxford*, Tristan cannot resist his desire to see Isolde and reaches Cornwall on a merchant ship. In order to enter the court, he is disguised as a madman and behaves as such, amusing the King, but saddening the Queen. With a clapper hanging around his neck he goes to court, tells a series of nonsense stories, and is let in and welcomed by shouts of laughter:

> Li fol entre enz par le wiket.
> Cuntre lui current li valet,
> [Si] l'escrïent cum hom fet lu:
> 'Veez le fol! hu! hu! hu! hu!'
> Li valet e li esquïer
> De buis le cuilent a rocher;
> Par la curt le vunt cunvaiant
> Li fol valet ki.l vunt siwant.
> Il lor tresturne mult suvent.
> Estre ki li gete a tanlent:
> Si nus l'asalt devers le destre,
> Il turne e fert devers senestre.
> Vers l'us de la sale apruchat,
> Le pel el col dedenz. (Oxford *Folie*, lines 247–60)

> [As the fool entered through the wicket,
> boys ran up around him,
> shouting as if at a wolf:
> 'Look at the madman! Grrr! Grrr!'
> The boys and squires
> began pelting him with sticks,
> thronging after him through the court
> as if mad themselves.
> He turned to them a number of times
> to see one or another attacking him;
> if the attack came from the right,
> he turned and struck back to the left.
> He reached the entrance to the great hall
> And, carrying his stick on his shoulder, went in.][14]

He tells his story, pretending to be Tantris.

[14] Text and translation from *La Folie Tristan (Oxford)*, ed. and trans. by Samuel N. Rosenberg, in *Early French Tristan Poems*, ed. by Lacy, I, 258–301.

Mark enjoys himself very much and he is far from suspecting the truth:

> ‘Reis, ne sui je bon menestrel?
> Ui vus ai servi de mun pel.’
> Puis fert del pel envirun sei:
> ‘Tolez,’ fet il, ‘de sur le rei!
> A voz ostels tost en alez!
> N’avez mangé? Ke demurrez?’
> Li reis s’en rit a chascun mot,
> [Ke] mult od bon deduit del sot.
> Puis cummande a un esquïer
> K’il li amenet sun destrer;
> Dit ke aler dedure volt
> Cum a custume faire solt. (Oxford *Folie*, lines 527–38)

> [‘King, am I not a fine entertainer?
> My pike will serve you today.’
> At that, he struck all around him with his stick.
> ‘Get away from the king!’ he cried.
> ‘Run back home!
> Haven’t you eaten? Then why hang on?’
> The king laughed at every word:
> for the idiot was truly amusing.
> Then he ordered a squire
> To bring him his horse,
> Saying that he wanted to go out
> for a ride, as he usually did.]

Brengana, who knows every detail of Tristan’s and Isolde’s love story, suspects that the madman could in fact be Tristan. Isolde, however, asserts the contrary, given his repulsive appearance (lines 579–90). Tristan, still not recognized by the Queen, compares her love for him to that of a drying up fountain:

> Ohi, Ysolt! Ohi, amie!
> Hom ke ben aime tart ublie!
> Mult valt funteine ki ben surt,
> Dunt li reuz est bon e ben curt;
> E de l’ure k’ele secchist,
> K’ewe n’i surt n’ewe n’en ist,
> Si ne fet gueres a praiser:
> Ne fait amur, quant volt boiser. (Oxford *Folie*, lines 701–08)

> [Oh, Yseut, my love!
> A man in love can never forget!
> A spring is valuable if it wells up high
> and its stream is swift and clear;

but the moment it dries up
and water neither rises nor flows,
it is not of value anymore:
nor is love, when it turns false.]

When it is Husdent, the dog, that recognizes him rather than the Queen, Tristan reproaches Isolde for being less faithful to him than the dog.

Tristran joïst Huden e tient
E dit: 'Ysolt, melz li suvient
Ke jo.l nurri, si l'afaitai,
Ke vus ne fait, ki tant amai.
Mult par at en chen grant franchise
E [at] en femme grant feintise.' (Oxford *Folie*, lines 933–38)

[Holding Hudent and petting him,
Tristan said: 'Yseut, he remembers
how I raised him and trained him
better than you remember how much I loved you.
What noble loyalty a dog can show
and what duplicity a woman.']

Tristan is here rather cruel towards the Queen, since he chooses to continue to speak with his altered voice even when alone with her, thereby making it more difficult for her to recognize him. Only when Isolde sees the ring and thinks that Tristan is dead does he talk to her in his normal voice and she finally understands. This time it is the Queen who takes her lover in her arms (lines 987–88). In the two versions of the *Folie*, a combination of a disguised voice and narrative tricks of fools creates a metalanguage which Tristan uses to tell his own story. However, as already noted, there are significant differences in the two versions: in the Berne *Folie*, the text is characterized by an apparent disorder in the presentation of events; the 'mad' Tristan wants to remind the Queen of their own story by mentioning these events and the symbolic objects that have played a significant role in their affair: the potion, the sword, the ring. In front of all the court, Tristan is given license by his madness to reveal the main features of his relationship with Isolde, going so far as to offend the King publicly; he then repeats in detail his account to the Queen once they have retired to her apartments.

In the Oxford *Folie*, the account follows a chronological order, but Tristan chooses to tell the court only the less compromising aspects, while continuing with the more intimate ones when alone with the Queen in her apartments. The love story in the Oxford *Folie* has thus become a narrative; but, unlike Gottfried's version, the two lovers read together the love stories of the past and thereby project themselves into a future where books will preserve the memory of the emotion that

unites them indissolubly. In Gottfried's version, it is Tristan alone who takes on the role of the narrator, almost to underline that the separation is definite even in the story itself.[15]

Tristan's simulated madness in the Oxford *Folie* refers to more archaic and jester-like aspects. It has a strong theatrical connotation, typical of a comedy based on misunderstandings, filled with rhetorical elements and changes of scenery; but brief and with emphasis given to narrative and recollections.[16] The audience witnesses how Tristan's exposure becomes more explicit, enjoys the irritation and ingenuousness of the King (who decides to go hunting all the same), observes Brengana's growing suspicion, foresees the surprise and emotion felt by Isolde, and awaits the moment when the main characters themselves will discover what they already know. Tristan actually tells the truth, but not being believed, uses the artifice of the jester's narrative to make the reader or listener laugh at the expense of the main characters, who are not yet fully aware of all the elements of the story.

The theme of disguise goes back to classical paradigms (primarily Odysseus's return to Ithaca[17]) and can be found in various forms throughout the verse romances, where Tristan enters the court disguised as a monk and a leper, for instance. The common factor in all his attempts to approach Isolde is that he dresses up as a man of a low social status. With his loss of identity, there is a reversal of the meaning of disguise, by which a sane man will take on the appearance of a madman in order to preserve his own identity, just as Odysseus does when threatened by the suitors who covet his wife and the throne of Ithaca.[18] In both versions of the *Folie* it is the dog that recognizes Tristan, once again a Homeric precedent,[19] but also related to

[15] See Patrizia Mazzadi, 'Prologo e digressioni nel Tristano di Gottfried von Straßburg', *Prospero: rivista di culture anglo-germaniche*, 8 (2001), 71–94 (p. 85).

[16] See *Tristan et Yseut: les premières versions européennes*, ed. by Christiane Marchello-Nizia, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 422 (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 1317.

[17] See Cigni, 'Tristano e Isotta nelle letterature francese e italiana', pp. 59–61.

[18] See Patrizia Mazzadi, 'Tradizione del mito di Tristano e ricezione primaria nei romanzi di Béroul, Thomas, Eilhart e Gottfried', in *Tristano e Isotta*, ed. by Dallapiazza, pp. 13–26 (p. 22). Also, Jean-Marie Fritz, *Le Discours du fou au Moyen Âge, XII^e et XIII^e siècles: étude comparée des discours littéraire, médical, juridique et théologique de la folie*, Perspectives littéraires (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992).

[19] Argos, Odysseus's old hunting dog, recognizes Odysseus and dies directly; see *Odyssey* 17.292–327.

medieval misogyny, in that a dog is deemed to have a more faithful nature than a woman.[20]

The episode on madness, even if consistent with the other episodes of deceit used by the two lovers throughout their story, is not edifying and is not acknowledged in the iconography, as is, for example, the episode of the orchard, in which the two lovers, noticing that they were observed by Mark, decide with mutual consent to continue their conversation as if they had not seen Mark, in order to deceive him. This scene casts light upon the power of the love that binds them together.[21] On the other hand, in the *Folies*, there is no evidence of such affinity between the lovers.

The authors of the two *Folies* chose to retrieve and expand the issue of madness. Why did they do so? We might interpret Tristan's love-sick madness as a prelude to his dying for love. In feigning madness, Tristan acts alone, without Isolde's complicity, and takes up the part of the madman in order to avoid real insanity, which will seize him in later versions of the story.[22] This episode of madness might also be intended as a way of avoiding the representation of the two lovers as victors, as they were in the orchard scene. On the contrary, the madness highlights didactically how low the knight that puts his own identity at risk for the sake of love can fall. The episode of the fool, which has an undeniable melancholic connotation (Tristan, having fled, is 'socially dead' in Cornwall!), can be read in contrast to the above-mentioned episode in the garden. In both scenes the truth is spoken without being understood, but with the fundamental difference that in the *Folie* Tristan appears to be deprived of all the courtly prerogatives of his identity.

All these scenes demonstrate how the madman was received, laughed at, and abused. The fact that Tristan pretends to be insane in order to approach the Queen makes no difference: the madman is a source of entertainment in the relation of the abuse of power between the torturer and the tortured, between one who suffers without even understanding what is happening and the one who mocks the victim and, at the same time, amuses whoever else looks on. A depraved game, ancient as the world.

In the Middle Ages the madman and the jester represented two forms of 'being different' which were discriminated against, since they were seen as differing from the image of God:

[20] See Cigni, 'Tristano e Isotta nelle letterature francese e italiana', p. 61.

[21] See Norbert H. Ott, 'Tristano e Isotta nell'iconografia medievale', in *Tristano e Isotta*, ed. by Dallapiazza, pp. 208–24 (pp. 211, 217, and 221).

[22] Language itself hints at the intrinsic danger of love as a 'fall': *To fall in love*, *tomber amoreux*.

> The fool said in his heart, 'There is no God.'
>
> They are corrupted, and become abominable in iniquities: there is none that doth good. God looked down from heaven on the children of men: to see if there were any that did understand, or did seek God.
>
> All have gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no not one. (Psalm 52. 1–4, Douay Version)

The fool is often symbolized with a mirror, to show that he only loves himself and does not acknowledge God. Originally this character had a strongly negative connotation, close to the one associated with the Devil,[23] but it could also represent *vanitas*, in particular with reference to fugacity of life, that is, to death itself. It should then not come as a surprise that this is the last of the disguises used by Tristan to meet the Queen, from whom he had now been irreversibly separated.

In Thomas's version, in the Norse version by Brother Robert, and in the English *Sir Tristrem*, the episode concerning the simulated madness is absent; there is, however, a prelude to the typical insanity of Tristan, found in later versions, which takes the form of obsession. Tristan has a room furnished with statues representing not only Isolde, but her entire entourage, as if to signify that he regrets not only his loved one, but a whole situation, a lifestyle, a happy and adventurous period of his life, a time when the knight was respected and loved; ironically, these were all elements that prevented him from marrying the white-handed Isolde.

> E les deliz des granz amors,
> E lor travaus e lor dolurs,
> E lor paignes, e lor ahans,
> Recorde a l'himage T[r]istans.
>
> [the joys of the great love between them,
> And the sufferings and sorrows,
> The pain and tribulations,
> Of all this Tristran reminded the statue.][24]

Paralysed by his own obsession, Tristan stares at those dumb images pitying his own destiny:

> Menbre lui de la covenance
> Qu'il ot a la deseverance;
> Hidonc plurë e merci crie

[23] A typical example is the Devil disguised as a jester in Goethe's *Faust*.

[24] Thomas, *I Tourin Fragment*, lines 1–4, ed. by Danielle Buschinger and Wolfgang Spiewok (Greifswald: Reineke, 1994); translations by Stewart Gregory, in *Early French Tristan Poems*, ed. by Lacy, II, 3–172.

De ce quë [il] pensa folie,
E siet bien que il est deceu
De la fole irur qu'il a eu.
Por içe fist il ceste image
Que dire li volt son corage,
Son bon penser, sa fole errur,
Sa paigne, sa joie d'amor,
Car ne sot vers cui descoverir
Ne son voler ne son desir. (Thomas, lines 980–91)

[He then remembered the pact
that he made as they parted,
and cried and begged forgiveness
for thinking such foolish thoughts,
knowing for certain that he had been tricked
by that foolish misconception in his heart.
He made that statue
because he wanted to tell it what was in his heart,
his good thoughts, and his wild misconceptions,
the pain he felt, and the joy of love,
since he knew not to whom to disclose
his longing and his heart's desire.]

Likewise, in the *Tristan en Prose* there is the episode of real madness: Tristan, jealous of Cardino and of the admiration that the Queen seems to have for the latter, loses his mind in the Morois forest:[25]

> Or dist li contes que, puis que mesires Tristans se fu partis de la damoisele ki mesagiere estoit de Palamidés et il ot si du tout perdu le sens et le memoire k'il ne savoit k'il faisoit, il conmencha esranment a desrompre les dras qu'il avoit vestu, ausi com uns forsené, si k'il aloit par mi le Marés braiant et criant, saillant et courant tout en tel maniere conme une beste forsenee. (*Tristan en Prose*, I, 247–48)[26]
>
> [The story recounts that after Sir Tristan had left the damsel, who was Palamides' messenger, and he had lost his mind and his memory to the point that he did not know what he was doing anymore, he began to rip off his clothes furiously, like a madman, and went through the Morois screaming, clamouring and running like a crazy beast.]

King Mark, while out hunting, meets Tristan and brings him to court as an amusement, but then agrees that the Queen may cure him, provided he then leaves.

[25] See Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Le Tristan en prose: Essai d'interprétation d'un roman médiéval* (Geneva: Droz, 1975); Cigni, 'Tristano e Isotta nelle letterature francese e italiana', pp. 71–102.

[26] *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*, ed. by Ménard, vol. I: *Des Aventures de Lancelot à la fin de la 'folie Tristan'* (1987).

Also in the fourteenth-century Italian *Tavola Ritonda* Tristan goes insane because he believes that Isolde betrays him with Ghedino, his brother-in-law.

> Adunque, era Tristano allora tanto infiammato dell'ira per questo caso, che nulla egli non intendeva: anzi, cosìe crucciato, si diparte quindi e vassene nella mastra stalla e monta in su qualunque palafreno egli incontra primiere; e appresso egli escie della città, e cavalca tanto quel giorno e l'altro, senza mangiare ebere, ch'egli si trova nella grande valle del grande diserto d'Urgano. E allora lascia andare suo cavallo, e gitta via sue armi, e stracciasi sua roba, e pelasi suoi biondi capelli e aqarciasi suo bello viso; e sempre per lo grande dolore, sì facea lo maggiore pianto del mondo. E sìe andava ignudo e scalzo, e non bevevo e non magiava; e, per le molte lagrime e per lo molto digiuno, la sustanzia della natura gli mancava fortemente, e in tutto egli perde suo senno e conoscimento; e a tale si condusse e venne, ch'egli pasceva l'erba. E alcuna fiata, egli prendeva alcuna fiera con mano per qualche avventura; della quale egli cosìe cruda sì ne mangiava. Egli era divenuto nero, livido, magro. (*Tavola Ritonda*, LXX)[27]

> [[B]ut Tristano was so inflamed with anger that he would listen to nothing she said. Full of torment, he left her and went to the main stable, where he mounted the first palfrey he came to. He went out of the city and rode day after day without eating or drinking until he came into a deep valley of the forest of Urgano. Then he let his horse walk, threw away all his arms, tore his clothes, touseled his blond hair, and disfigured his handsome face, and always in his great sadness, made the greatest complaint in the world. He went naked and barefoot and neither drank nor ate; weeping and fasting sapped his natural strength: he lost his sense and recognition of everything, and came to such a state that he pastured on grass. Once in a while, by some luck, he caught a beast with his bare hands and ate it raw. He grew sunburnt, mottled, and thin.][28]

Mark finds him while hunting; his horse's reaction and that of his dog make him realize that it is his nephew and allows for him to be cured by Isolde. The theme varies little in Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1469).[29] Tristan goes insane, because he is obsessed with the Queen's unfaithfulness. Once again he is found by Mark who does not recognize him and takes him with him. As soon as Tristan has recovered, he is banished from the court.

[27] *La Tavola Ritonda, L'istoria de Tristano*, ed. by F. L. Polidori, 2 vols (Bologna: Romagnoli, 1864–65), vol. I.

[28] *Tristan and the Round Table: A Translation of 'La Tavola Ritonda'*, trans. by Anne Shaver, Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 28 (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1983), pp. 163–64.

[29] See Claire Fennell, 'Tristano e Isotta nella letteratura inglese', in *Tristano e Isotta*, ed. by Dallapiazza, pp. 164–74.

This form of Tristan's madness can be ascribed to the regenerating transitional phase that can affect the knight in different ways;[30] consider for example Erec's apparent death or the madness of Iwein and of Percival, although in these cases the cause of madness is loss of honour and not of love. These are again a prelude to death since Tristan believes his lover to be unfaithful and so goes mad, just as later he, as a victim of his own mistrust, will die of grief because he believes the lies of the white-handed Isolde. The distance between Isolde and Tristan that emerged in the *Folies* is greater still in this instance. The perfect, indissoluble agreement between the lovers of the oldest version has yielded in the later versions to mistrust and estrangement, which presages, and finally provokes, madness.

In the *Tristan en Prose* it is Dinadan who underlines the element of madness in the affair; the self-destructiveness comes out, in all its violence:

> Se amours est de tel maniere qu'ele toille le sens as siens, donc di je bien que ce n'est mie amours, ains est rage de teste! (*Tristan en Prose*, V, 103)[31]
>
> [If love is such that is takes away your senses, then I am quite right in saying it is not love, but sickness of the mind.]

It is therefore Tristan, famous victim of love, who acts as a bridge with the *Orlando Furioso* of the Renaissance. Orlando is not defeated by a powerful enemy, but by the fact that it is his enemy who conquers the love of the proud Angelica, the woman all knights were 'crazy' about. The same can be said of Tristan, a knight whose destiny is jeopardized by his love for the Queen. Tristan, the perfect knight, is condemned to an unhappy life, as stated in the *Tavola Ritonda*:

> Tristano ebbe in sé prodezza sanza viltà e sanza inganno, amore sanza invidia, larghezza e cortesia sanza avarizia e sanza villania. E in ciò dimostra che fue dal principio per fino alla fine d'amore: e di ciò parla bene la Santa Scrittura, quando dice, che nullo puote nè debbe essere contento in questo mondo, nè dêe essere perfetto. Ma messer Tristano, essendo sì bello, prode, ricco e gentile, fue lo più disavventuroso cavaliere del mondo; e non fue mai una ora allegro, ched e' non fosse uno dì dolente e pensoso. (*Tavola Ritonda*, 33)
>
> [Tristano had prowess without meanness or deceit, love without envy, largesse and courtesy without avarice or villainy. Thus he showed that he was from first to last worthy of courtly love. The Holy Scripture spoke of this when it said that none can or ought to be content in this world, or perfect; but Sir Tristano, being so handsome, noble, rich, and gentle, was

[30] See Cigni, 'Tristano e Isotta nelle letterature francese e italiana', p. 94; Anne Berthelot, 'La Folie Tristan', in *Tristan et Yseut: un thème éternel dans la culture mondial*, ed. by Danielle Buschinger and Wolfgang Spiewok (Greifswald: Reineke, 1996), pp. 27–43.

[31] *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*, vol. V: *D l'arrivée des amants à la Joyeuse Garde jusqu'à la fin du tournoi de Louveserp*, ed. by Denis Lalande (Thierry: Delcourt, 1992).

> the most unfortunate knight in the world, for he did not have one happy hour that he did not also have a day of sorrow and care.] (trans. by Shaver, p. 78)

The common factor in all the versions considered is that they concentrate on the aftermath of love, the epilogue, where memories and words prevail. We might say that the episodes explain to the characters themselves what that love had been that had united them at its climax. Madness represents just one of the possible sides of parting and abandonment. With his simulated madness Tristan breaks through the screaming silence that has accompanied his story. He liberates himself through his narrative, acquiring independent life at each phase of such suffered love. We therefore witness how the sad wording of memories, of a love that is alive only in narrative and that has no self-deceiving affection left, crystallizes and plainly shows its 'mad' character, which will be fully developed in later versions.

The image of Tristan, and therefore the image of the knight, has changed over time. In the earlier versions he is able to control the emotions caused by his miserable love for the Queen. He pretends to be crazy, but is not; he pays a social price, compromising his image, but he is always clearheaded. In the later versions he becomes entirely a victim, losing self-control and being at the mercy of his feelings. This clearly shows how this new image of the knight, to which Ariosto will adapt the same legendary paladin Orlando, is distant from the older image. At the same time the concept of love has changed. If in the earlier versions love represents an invincible and indissoluble power, which shows the lovers bound together by an equal and loyal feeling, perfectly shared, in the later versions love gives way to mistrust, to disagreement, to an emotional gap. This causes a more bitter suffering than the love in Eilhart, Thomas, and Gottfried. Its distinctiveness lies in the loneliness that leads to madness.

'What kind of fool am I?': The Tragi-comedy of the Love Potion in the Thomas/Gottfried Branch of the Tristan Legend

Neil Thomas

> Gottfried is offering us a realistic portrait of two noble people in the grip of a passion that sweeps all moral constraint away and leaves them helpless and broken in the face of destiny. Love of one's sovereign lady, which in the courtly literature brings an idealized and Platonic release from the things of the world, brings chaos, wretchedness, and death. Through the story of Tristan, therefore, medieval readers could discern both the power of the courtly ideal and the human reality that subverts it.[1]

The romance of *Tristan* rests on a tragi-comic premise giving it the texture of an extended *fabliau* which abounds in the kind of black humour characteristic of that genre. The potion drunk by the lovers in the Thomas/Gottfried version of the Tristan legend, through its capacity to deprive them of their reason and free will, establishes the fundamental principal of a narrative in which Tristan and Isolde are reduced to the status of puppets of fate.[2] One of

[1] Roger Scruton, *Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's 'Tristan and Isolde'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 29. Citations are from *Gottfried von Strassburg*, *Tristan*, trans. by Rüdiger Krohn, based on the text of Friedrich Ranke, 3 vols (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998) and from *Thomas of Britain*, *Tristran*, ed. and trans. by Stewart Gregory (New York: Garland, 1991).

[2] 'Man wird zu dem Gedanken gedrängt, dass es gerade die Liebestrankepisode war, die dem Tristandichter das Prinzip der Handlung zugespielt haben könnte: am Zufall des Liebestrankes hat er möglicherweise das Gesetz der Welt abgelesen, in die er seinen Tristan stellen wollte': Walter Haug, '*Aventiure* in Gottfrieds von Strassburg *Tristan*', in *Festschrift für Hans Eggers zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Herbert Backes, Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur (PBB), 94 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972), pp. 88–125 (p. 117).

Gottfried von Strassburg's continuators,[3] Ulrich von Türheim, even went so far as to gloss Tristan's love as mad or nonsensical, having his Tristan figure address himself in the terms of a man vainly attempting to put by 'unsin' (nonsense). Ulrich characterizes his own version of the story as being a story of a man robbed of his wits by the potion — a sentiment which, glossed metaphorically, is reminiscent of the ancient Greek understanding of intercourse between male and female entailing contortions so comic that the act must have been devised in some part for the amusement of the gods:

> ine gehôrte nie bî mînen tagen
> weder gelesen noch gesagen
> von sô wol gelobetem man,
> als was der werde Tristan.
> heite in daz tranc der minne
> niht braht ûf unsinne![4]

[In all my days I never heard or read of such a noble and respected man as Tristan; his good reputation would have remained intact had not the drinking of the potion driven him to such folly.]

The suggestion has been made that the mental disorientation of Thomas's Tristran may be attributed to the malefic effects of the potion alone. According to this line of argument, the hero becomes not merely an artificial fool (*bricun* — the role he assumes for opportunistic reasons in the *Folie Tristan d'Oxford* and the *Folie Tristan de Berne*) but a natural one (*fol naif*).[5] However, matters of relative chronology are important here, and it may be noted that, although there is much that is risible in the lovers' being caught on the horns of their sexual/moral dilemma, the decision to portray Tristan as being what would now be termed clinically mad was an imaginative development of the later, French *Prose Tristan*:

> As for his madness, there can be no doubt that the germ of this is already present in the traditional story. In both poems of the *Folie Tristan* the hero's longing is such that it very

[3] For an account of the complete German tradition, see Marc Chinca, 'Tristan Narratives from the High to the Late Middle Ages', in *The Arthur of the Germans*, ed. by W. H. Jackson and S. A. Ranawake (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 117–34. For the French tradition, see Geoffrey Bromiley and Tony Hunt, 'The Tristan Legend in Old French Verse', in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. by Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 112–34.

[4] See Ulrich von Türheim, *Tristan*, ed. by Thomas Kerth, Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 89 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979), lines 3577–82. Cf. also lines 49–57.

[5] Jacqueline Schaeffer, 'Tristan's Folly: Feigned or Real?', *Tristania*, 3 (1977), 3–16.

> nearly drives him insane, and this probably gives him the idea of going to see Iseut in Cornwall disguised as a fool. But there is one fundamental difference: in the [*Folie*] poems Tristan was playing the fool and pretending to be mad; in the prose romance he *is* mad [...]. He rushes wildly into the forest, thinking that he had lost his beloved for ever, and this thought deprives him of his reason [...]. It is as though the prose author wanted to develop the full potential of certain sentiments and ideas which he found in embryo in the traditional legend, and he has certainly made the most of the dramatic possibilities of Tristan's frenzy.[6]

To be sure, Gottfried's Tristan has a plaint concerning the 'love that so distracts me, | that robs me of life and reason' (lines 19428–35); furthermore, Isolde's extraordinary attempt to have Brangaene assassinated lest she betray the lovers' secrets to Marke could arguably be taken as testimony that she had become 'unhinged' by drinking the potion, at least in moral terms. The narrator in fact makes no effort to explain her assassination attempt on grounds of rational criteria, and simply labels her 'strange Isolde' ('wunderlîch Isot', line 12922). The implication is perhaps that no further explanation *could* be provided for such a wayward act. Isolde's aberration aside, however, Gottfried did not expand further on the madness theme, his version in any case breaking off before a full development of the issue would have been possible.[7] What emerges in the German version is more the existential problematic of human folly in the universal rather than the rarer, clinical sense. This theme will undoubtedly have been of interest not only to that part of the audience prone to philosophical contemplation but to that more numerous group of persons ready and willing in an age well before what has been termed the Romantic extension of sensibility to give free rein to their Schadenfreude in mocking the afflicted.[8]

At a time when the herbal arts of 'wise women', such as the fictional mother of the young princess Isolde, must have relied more on haphazard experimentation than

[6] *The Romance of Tristan: The Thirteenth-Century Old French 'Prose Tristan'*, trans. by Renée Curtis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Introduction, p. xxi.

[7] The much-debated crux as to why Gottfried's version broke off cannot be addressed here but, just as Eilhart's German version can be used as an approximate guide to the missing portions of Béroul, so the incomplete sections of Gottfried and Thomas can be 'filled in' by recourse to the Norwegian adaptation of Thomas, Brother Robert's *Tristrams Saga ok Isöndar*. For the Norse text and English translation by Peter Jorgensen, see *Norse Romance*: *The Tristan Legend*, ed. by Marianne Kalinke, Arthurian Archives, 3 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), pp. 23–226.

[8] On what a medieval audience might have found 'funny', see *Medieval Comic Tales*, ed. by Derek Brewer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1972), Introduction. See also Rosamund Allen in this volume.

on controlled medical testing, we may suppose that the elixirs devised to soothe, cure, or boost the vitality of their patients might have had unpredictable and frequently paradoxical effects.[9] The ingredients of love potions and other medicinal preparations might typically include narcotics like opium or hallucinogens such as mandrake, wolf's bane, or hashish. Given the mind-altering properties of such drugs, the device of a love potion with the power to unleash eternal passion will have been an apt contemporary image with which to encapsulate the unpredictability of the onset of sexual desire and the uncontrollability of its later consequences. The lovers' drinking of the potion marks the point of departure for a mordant exploration of what happens when sexual relationships, ostensibly regulated by dynastic requirements for the good of all, lead to a tragi-comic debacle for which no person can properly be made accountable. The romance may in that sense be ranged with other darkly comic world narratives such as those of Oedipus, Gregorius, Balain and Balin,[10] or the insect-like transformation of Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*, all of which portray contingency as a demeaning curse of the human condition in implicit opposition to the Renaissance affirmation of humankind's inborn dignity.

The centrality of this theme to the Tristan legend can be gauged by the fact that even the composer Richard Wagner, inclined to downplay what he took to be some of the more ludicrous details of his medieval sources, felt obliged to retain the device of the philtre as an indispensable coup de theâtre in the articulation of the message of his music drama.[11] To be sure, its pharmaceutical power in the opera is

[9] On the effects of love potions historically, see Irmgard Müller, 'Liebestränke, Liebeszauber und Schlafmittel in der mittelalterlichen Literatur', in *Liebe-Ehe-Ehebruch in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. by Xenja von Ertzdorff and Marianne Wynn, Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie, 58 (Giessen: Schmitz, 1984), pp. 71–87; Anna Keck, *Die Liebeskonzeption der mittelalterlichen Tristanromane: Zur Erzähllogik der Werke Bérouls, Eilharts, Thomas und Gottfrieds* (Munich: Fink, 1998), and the useful *Forschungsbericht* by Sidney Johnson, '"This drink will be the death of you": Interpreting the Love Potion in Gottfried's *Tristan*', in *A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg's 'Tristan'*, ed. by Will Hasty (New York: Camden House, 2003), pp. 87–112.

[10] Balain in the *Suite du Merlin* becomes an unwitting sinner consigning his environs to the condition of a wasteland after he inadvertently administers the 'dolorous stroke' — 'le cop dolereus par coi li roiames de Listenois (=Logres) est tornés a dolur et a essil': *Merlin*, 2 vols, ed. by Gaston Paris and Jacob Ulrich (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1888), II, 57.

[11] For comparisons of the Gottfridian and Wagnerian versions, see Renée Curtis, 'Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*: The Transformation of a Medieval Legend', *Tristania*, 8 (1983), 3–14; Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich, 'The Modern Reception of the Arthurian Legend', in *The Arthur of the Germans*, ed. by Jackson and Ranawake, pp. 303–23; Neil Thomas, 'Tristan in Germany between Gottfried von Strassburg, Wagner and Thomas Mann', in *The Growth of the Tristan and*

not instrumentally effective in causing the lovers' transports, since the composer's hero and heroine had fallen in love before drinking it;[12] but it does license the couple to articulate more vocally the love they had already experienced inwardly. Whilst Thomas Mann once commented that Wagner's lovers might as well have drunk a glass of water as a love potion (in view of their prior passion), in Gottfried's version, by contrast, the philtre is an indispensable prop which symbolizes the irruption of the irrational into the lovers' lives, the very suddenness of its effects being a marker of its thematic importance in countermanding their good intentions in so irremediably crass a manner.[13]

Whilst Gottfried's source, Thomas, may have sought (like Wagner in future time) to portray an 'amor fine e veraie' existing between the lovers before their drinking of the philtre,[14] Gottfried clearly defines the couple as being kin enemies (Tristan having slain Isolde's uncle, Morolt) at the time before they are presented with 'the doom-laden vessel'. In a romance in which 'a number of things, including some highly significant ones, are described by the narrator as happening *von âventiure*, by chance',[15] the philtre effectively uncovers the fact of the biological quirkiness of human sexual behaviour and so laces it with the anti-providentialist suggestion that no benign, intelligent designer could logically be thought to have shaped the ends of beings in thrall to so ludicrous a determinism.[16]

Iseut Legend in Wales, England, France and Germany, ed. by Phillipa Hardman and others (Lampeter: Mellen, 2003), pp. 149–84.

[12] In Wagner's more naturalistic dramaturgy, when Isolde sets out to murder Tristan for the death of Morold (here her fiancé) we get the following, psychologizing retrospective by Isolde which documents the moment when 'pity' became erotic attachment: 'Von seinem Bette/blickt' er [Tristan] her, — /nicht auf das Schwert,/nicht auf die Hand, — /er sah mir in die Augen./Seines Elendes jammerte mich;/das Schwert — das ließ ich fallen' (Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde: Textbuch mit Varianten der Partitur*, ed. by Egon Voss (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003), Act I, scene 1, p. 19).

[13] 'Der Eros zeigt sich als eine politisch nicht verfügbare, nicht kalkulierbare Macht. In der Zufälligkeit und Plötzlichkeit des Trankes steckt seine Symbolik': Walter Haug, *Der Tristanroman im Horizont der erotischen Diskurse des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, Wolfgang Stammler Gastprofessur Für Germanische Philologie, 10 (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 2000), p. 31.

[14] See *Tristan*, ed. by Peter Ganz, 2 vols (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1978), I, Introduction, pp. xxiii–xxiv, for discussion of this point.

[15] Nigel Harris, 'God, Religion and Ambiguity in *Tristan*', in *A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan*, ed. by Hasty, pp. 113–36 (p. 122).

[16] The nature of such a provocation for medieval audiences can perhaps be estimated by considering the modern form of the idea which invokes the biological accident of congenital constitution

The maintaining of an oblique suggestiveness about the philtre motif will have allowed medieval poets to keep their story this side of overt heresy (inasmuch as no formal, propositional challenge to the doctrine of God's providential aims is mounted). At the same time, the potion will have contained a veiled implication for those many listeners whose epistemological and philosophical outlooks had been formed eclectically. In that strange form of cognitive dissonance peculiar to the medieval centuries, many might have inclined, with Dante, to accord the long-lived goddess of chance, Fortuna, a co-regency with the God of the Christian tradition (even though, logically, her presence made a nonsense of the dogma of divine Providence).[17] In the event it is little but a fall of the dice (in the form of an inexperienced waiting maid) which is most immediately responsible for the mischance:

> er [sc. Tristan] bat im trinken bringen.
> Nûne was dâ nieman inne
> âne die küneginne
> wan cleiniu juncvrouwelîn.
> der einez sprach, 'seht, hie stât wîn
> in disem vezzelîne.'
> nein, ezn was niht mit wîne,
> doch ez ime gelîch waere.
> ez was diu wernde swaere,
> diu endelôse herzenôt,
> von der si beide lâgen tôt. (*Tristan*, ed. by Ranke, lines 11666–76)

[Tristan asked for drink to be brought. Now there was nobody about but some young waiting maids, one of whom said, 'Look — there is wine in this small vessel.' No, the vessel was not filled with wine although it looked like it. It was the eternal distress and pain of the heart which was to lead them both to their deaths.]

The extent of the lovers' subsequent estrangement from the world of the courtly consensus in pursuit of what Gottfried's continuator, Ulrich, bleakly

to explain sexual orientation. This finding, however scientifically compelling, is apparently a bitter enough potion for many even in the post-Darwinian age to swallow. It would have been proportionately more difficult for the denizens of an era which may not have been precisely the monolithic age of faith often alleged but which was certainly an age of capitulation to the normative power of the *guardians* of that faith.

[17] Fortuna became the de facto hypostatization of the notion of fate in the medieval period. Defying the imprecations of St Augustine, she was allowed a space even in Christian cosmographies such as the *Divine Comedy*. See Max Wehrli, 'Antike Mythologie im christlichen Mittelalter', *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 57 (1983), 18–32; and Walter Haug, 'O Fortuna: Eine historisch-semantische Skizze zur Einführung', in *Fortuna*, ed. by Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger, Fortuna Vitrea, 1 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), pp. 1–22.

termed nonsense, is indicated uniquely in the Thomas/Gottfried branch by their withdrawal to an enchanted retreat, the Grotto of Love. Whereas the Béroul/Eilhart version features a harshly realistic account of how the lovers are forced, after being found out in adultery, to flee for their lives to the inhospitable forest of Morrois, the dismal wood is changed into a pleasaunce-cum-grotto in the Thomas/Gottfried branch. This idealized location (ostensibly) allows the lovers to fulfil their desires without the need for subterfuge, but at length proves to be something of a fools' paradise when the narrator uses irony and hyperbole to indicate that the grotto is but a snatched interlude after which 'the last laugh is on them'.[18]

When Gottfried allegorizes the cave in ironic terms appropriate to a Gothic cathedral,[19] he would appear to set the seal on the lovers' felicity, even though this is anything but the case. Each of the architectural features of the cave (which in Gottfried's account is expanded far beyond the humble dimensions of any putative prototype in the Cornish or Breton local landscape)[20] corresponds to some facet of the love of Tristan and Isolde. Its roundness symbolizes the guilelessness of love, its breadth love's infinite power, and its height love's infinite scope, all articulated in a waggish, arguably heretical instrumentalization of the fourfold mode of biblical exegesis.[21] Only true initiates may pass through the open door of this quasi cathedral, we are invited to think. For others (such as Marke) to do so would be a desecration of the lovers' sanctum (despite Marke's being both the accredited king and lawful husband of Isolde). The cave is, to use the hyperbole of Gottfried's prologue, a place reserved for 'noble hearts' (*edele herzen*). However, it turns out to be a flawed arcadia when a number of narratorial asides consign the grotto to the realm of misguided fantasy rather than to that of cartographic reality.

[18] See D. H. Green, *Irony in the Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 111–19; Neil Thomas, 'The *Minnegrotte*: Shrine of Love or Fools' Paradise? Thomas, Gottfried and the European Development of the Tristan Legend', *Trivium*, 23 (1988), 89–106.

[19] Friedrich Ranke, *Die Allegorie der Minnegrotte in Gottfrieds 'Tristan'*, Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse, 2 (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1925); repr. in *Gottfried von Straßburg*, ed. by Alois Wolf, Wege der Forschung, 320 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), pp. 1–24.

[20] See Lucy Polak, 'The Two Caves of Love in the *Tristan* by Thomas', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 33 (1970), 52–69; and Silvia Harris, 'The Cave of Lovers in the *Tristramsaga* and Related Romances', *Romania*, 98 (1977), 306–33, 460–500.

[21] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

Such is made clear when, against the grain of the medieval convention that a writer would claim his narrative expressed *wârheit* (truth), Gottfried declines to grant the cave an empirical reality. He had known the place since his eleventh year, he tells us cryptically, yet had never set foot in Cornwall,[22] a mocking statement which would appear to indicate that such a pleasaunce could have little existence outside the sphere of pubescent sexual reverie. Futhermore, the fanciful notion that Tristan and Isolde could sustain themselves on love alone is countered ironically with the mock-autobiographical disclosure that it had been a long time since the narrator had enjoyed such nectar.[23] Meanwhile, the lovers' ambition to be able to live an autonomous *wunschleben* (perfect life) without the benefit of food and/or society is repeatedly ridiculed.[24] Having thus problematized the distinction between the realms of the real and the ideal, the narrator shows the couple stumbling over the category distinction. Returning from the quasi-paradisal grotto, they try to replicate the circumstances of their enchanted idyll in the all-too-real environs of Marke's court by the somewhat maladroit expedient of moving a bed into the castle orchard. This event, predictably, leads to their apprehension and to Tristan's exile — the joke here being that fantasy and reality make poor bedfellows.

To be sure, the folly of the medieval lovers does not attain the exaggerated pitch of that of Wagner's 'death-devoted hearts' (*todgeweihte Herzen*), questing souls who abstract themselves entirely from the here and now in pious anticipation of the merely postulated noumenal sphere which they imagine to be the non-corporeal location of their quasi-mystical union. The medieval lovers, even when granted permission to retreat to the love grotto by Marke, do not totally turn their backs on society. In an innovation not represented in Gottfried's French source, the lovers leave the waiting maid, Brangaene, behind at court in the hope that she will be able to arrange a future accommodation between themselves and the society whose approval they still covet.[25] The medieval lovers, innocent of that peculiarly

[22] 'ich hân die fossiure erkant | sît mînen eilif iaren ie | und enkam ze Kurnewâle nie' (lines 17140–42; I have known the cave since my eleventh year and yet was never in Cornwall myself).

[23] 'ich treip ouch eteswenne | alsûs getane lebesite | dô dûhte mich genuoc dermite' (lines 16924–26; I at one time enjoyed such a lifestyle and it seemed to me good enough [at that time]).

[24] No food at King Arthur's Round Table could have satisfied them more than their love, we are told (lines 16864–69), but the narrator has a poker-faced Parthian shot underlining how their social credibility weighs more heavily with them than they acknowledge: 'sîne haeten umbe ein bezzer leben | niht eine bône gegeben | wan eine umb ir êre' (lines 16679–81; They would not have given a fig for a better life except in respect of their good name amongst their peers).

[25] 'wan daz si sî dâ durch den list | eine kurzlîche vrist | tweln und belîben hiezen | und sî [sc. Brangaene] bî Marke liezen | daz sî diu suone von in zwein | wider Marken aber trüege in ein' (lines

solipsistic mode of consciousness nurtured by Wagner's reception of Schopenhauer and German Romantic philosophy, keep their feet more firmly on the ground of their social world than their nineteenth-century successors. Nevertheless, that they would still have been accounted foolish by medieval standards can be seen clearly enough if we read *Tristan* as medieval audiences would have read or heard it, that is, intertextually against the background of near-contemporary products of the Arthurian tradition.[26]

It has been observed that '*Tristan* arouses expectations of a romance, though in essential and significant ways the pattern of the romance is reversed'.[27] Contrasting the experience of Tristan and Isolde with that of the protagonists of the contemporary Arthurian genre, William MacDonald concluded that Gottfried presented us with 'a type of love which is its own law [...] in a world turned upside-down'.[28] Between the Arthurian and Tristan 'matters' there existed a philosophical antipathy,[29] demonstrated most vividly by observing the wholly different ethical standard adopted by Chrétien de Troyes in his Arthurian romances compared with that employed by him in his non-Arthurian adultery story, *Cligès*, a work in which 'no clear didactic purpose emerges, no striving for an ideal wholeness either personal,

16673–78; except that they employed the ruse of leaving Brangaene behind for a short time and had her stay with Mark so as to be able to bring about an accommodation between themselves and Mark).

[26] 'Gottfried's *Tristan* is a poem composed in clear awareness of the courtly romance, against which it begs to be measured. The poet plays with traditional form and content, observing chivalry, courtliness and Arthurian ideals of love from the distance that irony and parody provide': William C. McDonald, *Arthur and Tristan: On the Intersection of Legends in Medieval German Literature* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1982), p. 78. See also McDonald, 'Gottfried von Strassburg: Tristan and the Arthurian Tradition', in *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*, ed. by Joan Tasker Grimbert (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 147–85; Walter Haug, 'Der Tristan – eine interarthurische Lektüre', in *Artusroman und Intertextualität*, ed. by Friedrich Wolfzettel, Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie, 58 (Giessen: Schmitz, 1990), pp. 57–72. On structural similarities between the two traditions, see also Hugo Kuhn, *Tristan, 'Nibelungenlied', Artusstruktur*, Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, 5 (Munich: Beck, 1973).

[27] Kathleen J. Meyer, 'Allegory and Generic Ambiguity in Gottfried's *Tristan*', in *Genres in Medieval German Literature*, ed. by Hubert Heinen and Ingeborg Henderson, GAG, 439 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1986), pp. 47–58 (p. 53).

[28] McDonald, *Arthur and Tristan*, p. 67.

[29] See Eckehard Höfner, 'Zum Verhältnis von Tristan- und Artusstoff im 12. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, 92 (1982), 289–323.

social or cosmic'.[30] In this work, the lovers Cligès and Fénice surrender themselves to their forbidden passion in their remote tower until the husband's retainer, Bernhard, espies them (rather like Marke's master huntsman) and reports them to Alis, Fénice's lawful husband. To be sure, Chrétien does engineer a pro forma happy ending, but this is gained by means of a somewhat unambitious deus ex machina technique (the husband, Alis, suddenly and rather too conveniently drops down dead). The improbable timing of this event, together with the fact that two further, magical devices are necessary to complete the precarious dramaturgy of the happy ending, hardly lead us to suppose that Chrétien was advancing a serious meditation on the kind of dilemma faced by Fénice (or, by extension, on that of Isolde).

There is then little ethical continuity linking *Cligès* to the French author's more didactic Arthurian romances, and it is often supposed that the morally questionable subject matter of the various medieval stories about sexual infidelity must have led German writers of Arthurian romance to avoid the imputation of ethical inconsistency by skirting the trio of traditions concerned with 'the matter of adultery' as being too close to the amoral genre of the *fabliau*:

> Perhaps Cligès's adulterous love for Fénice and Lancelot's for Guinevere seemed too great a departure from the notion of the Arthurian world cultivated in *Erec* and *Yvain*, where the knightly quest culminates, after trial and tribulation, in the reconciliation of knighthood and love, or in Chrétien's unfinished *Perceval*, where knighthood was supposed to have an altogether more spiritual purpose — service to the Grail.[31]

Gottfried may have known that the adultery theme would have been thought especially provocative within the German context since even the specifically named *Lanzelet* of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven (*c.* 1194) had reported nothing of a Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur triangle. The eponymous hero of that romance is, to be sure, granted a rich sexual biography, but Guinevere does not figure in his tally of conquests. This distinctively German sense of narrative proprieties also seems to be reflected in the sanitized treatment of the famous triangle in *Die Krone* of Heinrich von dem Türlin, where the name of Lancelot is replaced by the more obscure, semi-mythic Gasozein, a figure claimed to have been only the Queen's *former* lover (not

[30] Lucy Polak, *Cligès*, Critical Guides to French Texts, 23 (London: Grant and Cutler, 1982), p. 94. For the text, see *Cligès*, ed. by Alexandre Micha, Classiques Français du Moyen Âge, 84 (Paris: Champion, 1957).

[31] Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, trans. by Thomas Kerth with additional notes by K. G. T. Webster and R. S. Loomis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), Introduction, p. 12.

one of her husband's present circle of knights).[32] Even after the faithful rendering of the *Lancelot-Grail* cycle into German after 1225 (this text being the locus classicus for the description of the Lancelot and Guinevere affaire), Ulrich Füetrer, writing in the late fifteenth century, could still be evasive about the role of the adultery in the downfall of Arthur's kingdom. Füetrer treated the Lancelot material first in prose then in a longer verse form, but in each case he let the famous affair between Guinevere and Lancelot go unconsummated.[33] For Füetrer, Fortuna or simple chance accounts for the downfall of Arthur's kingdom, not sexual delinquency.[34]

To contemporary audiences accustomed to the 'binary' narrative and moral structure of Arthurian romance ('doppelter Cursus') it must have appeared a provocation to find that Tristan, having been exiled from Cornwall to Brittany, fails to atone for his adulterous conduct in a manner congruent with their horizon of expectations. Audiences will have known how Hartmann's Erec successfully extricates himself from his amorous obsession to prove he can regain his honour as a knight. Here, in a resounding vindication of the chivalry topos, Enite finally no longer functions as a sexual snare but as a spur to chivalric action. By analogy with such a schema, we might anticipate Tristan 'reinventing' himself by reforging a stronger self-identity for himself within his adoptive Armorican society. The beginnings of such an 'Arthurianization'[35] of the Tristan narrative are apparent as Tristan acquits himself well as a knight and soldier with Kaherdin, the second Isolde's brother, amongst the Breton military ranks. However, for Tristan there is no traditional quest for a reconciliation of love and chivalry according to the norms

[32] Elizabeth Andersen, 'Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône* and the Prose *Lancelot*: An Intertextual Study', *Arthurian Literature*, 7 (1987), 23–49.

[33] Ulrich Füetrer, *Der Prosaroman von Lanzelot*, ed. by Arthur Peter (Tübingen: Litterarischer Verein in Stuttgart, 1885; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1972); *Lannzilet Aus dem Buch der Abenteuer Str. 1123–6009*, ed. by Rudolf Voß (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996).

[34] 'While Lancelot's love for the Queen remains [in Füetrer's *Lannzilet*] the motivating source for his actions, it does not play a decisive role in his failure as Grail hero or in the destruction of Arthur's realm': Hans-Hugo Steinhoff, 'Lancelot in Germany', in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. by Carol Dover (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), pp. 173–84 (p. 178).

[35] By this term I do not mean the introduction of Arthurian dramatis personae into the Tristan story but refer to the fact that the Isolde of the White Hands sections reveal certain affinities with the structures of the Arthurian romances. Constance Bouchard contended that this part of the legend is neither Celtic nor Breton in origin but bears the hallmark of a French courtly tradition probably penned 'by an author imbued with thirteenth-century courtly concepts who felt an ending was needed for the original story': Constance B. Bouchard, 'On the Possible Non-existence of Thomas, Author of *Tristan and Isolde*', *Modern Philology*, 79 (1981–82), 66–72 (pp. 71–72).

of an Arthurian ideology. Such achievements are not possible because Tristan's actions, unlike those of the Arthurian heroes, are determined by a potion whose metaphorical power is made eternal in the Thomas/Gottfried tradition (as opposed to its three-/four-year 'shelf life' in the Béroul/Eilhart versions) and which therefore makes a nonsense of his attempts to resist it. This disallows him the capacity to take a second lover in the kind of easy transition from one partner to another found in the romance world of *Iwein* (where Laudine swiftly finds it within herself to be able to marry her husband's murderer).

Whilst this kind of harmonious transition (where the issue of any emotional harm to one or another of the parties remains unexamined) reflects the more conciliatory pattern of knightly biography found in the Arthurian genre, the notion of a painless exchange of one beloved partner for another comes under more critical scrutiny in *Tristan* with its realistic ethos and antipathy to romance teleologies. Tristan, at length exiled from the first Isolde and compelled to live apart from her in Brittany, is unable to consummate his union with the second Isolde, the woman he had married in hopes of dissipating memories of his Cornish lover. Thomas's Tristran is capable of applying his *raisun* to the knightly arts proper, but the realm of reason has limits not extending to the emotional sphere. Although it is *reasonable* that he should wish to cement his bond with his adoptive society by making love to the second Isolde, he is unable to do so since the effect of the potion means that memories of the first Isolde flood back to him inopportunely and render him sexually inactive. This failure contains a subtle satire of contemporary romances since Tristan's involuntary failure to consummate his marriage to the Breton Isolde frustrates his plans for an 'Arthurian' comeback as he himself ruefully concedes in his lament that 'all that I have won by force of arms will be lost by my failure in the domain of love'[36] (a sentiment which may also be read as a somewhat sceptical critique of the pious, Patristic hope that the male erection — or lack of it — should be determined by the will, rather than by arbitrary, physiological response patterns).

The ideal of the knightly hero in medieval verse was typically a homogeneous one, for feudal society did not encourage large variations in individual outlook, and definitions of knightly perfection were largely based on fictional representations

[36] 'Si jo m'astinc de la faisance | Dolur en avrai et pesance | E ma proiece et ma franchise | Turnera a recreantise; | Ço que ni conquis par ma valur | Perderai ore par cest amur' (*Tristran*, ed. and trans. by Gregory, lines 578–83; If I refrain from this consummation I will suffer terrible woes and my integrity will be exchanged for ignominy. That which I have won by my chivalry will be lost in the bedchamber).

of knights of King Arthur, the king who, as Köhler pointed out, was to become in ideological terms 'das Geschöpf der feudal-höfischen Welt' (the creature of the feudal mind-set).[37] Deviations from the recognized norm therefore tended to be described in rather 'Manichean' tones. This can be observed for instance in the case of the *parvenu* anti-hero of Wernher's *Helmbrecht* (*c.* 1250), the unchivalrous knight whose biographical trajectory, characterized by a host of ironic reverse symmetries, has been analysed as a deliberate travesty of that of Erec or Parzival.[38] Whilst Erec successfully atones for his initial sin of omission, Helmbrecht commits an initial act of *arriviste* folly subsequently compounded by wanton cruelty in the service of avarice. Whereas Parzival does homage to the *mores* of the Arthurian world, Helmbrecht scorns and disowns his father, the patriarchal centre of his own social *ordo*. Whilst Erec returns to court to pay homage to Arthur, Helmbrecht returns to his village as an apostle of evil with a satanic breviary impelling him to harass his own class. Finally, in an inversion of the convention whereby Arthur bestows his final blessing on an individual knight, Helmbrecht *père* exiles his son from his own home.

In a similar sense, Gottfried's hero also becomes a knight *manqué*, and this is conveyed in a number of narrative inversions. When, after the ordeal scene (where the lovers, though guilty, manage to trick their inquisitors by Isolde's doctored oath), Tristan returns to court, it is not with genuinely restored *être* in the 'Arthurian' sense but with what is described as a counterfeit form of honour. It might have *appeared* that the lovers' credibility had been restored, but Marjodo and Melot (two spies who play a role functionally similar to that of Sir Kay in the Arthurian romances) are able to see through the dishonest charade of the red hot iron. In acidulous tones the narrator dilates on the worthless boon the lovers have won in an extended critique where the couple is held to possess only the 'samblanze' of honour (line 16323) and where the narrator puts the following rhetorical question to his audience:

> 'waz ist der rede nu mêre?
> ez ist êre âne êre'. (*Tristan*, ed. by Ranke, lines 16331–32)

[What more words do you need? Theirs was a matter of honour without honour.]

[37] Erich Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik*, 2nd edn (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1970), p. 7.

[38] Wernher der Gärtner, *Helmbrecht*, ed. by Fritz Tschirch, 3rd edn (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002). The structure of *Helmbrecht* was referred to as a 'pseudo-höfisch(e) Travestie': Haug, 'O Fortuna', p. 42.

In what seems an equally tongue-in-cheek *contrafactura* of the 'Arthurian' narrative pattern,[39] Thomas's Tristran is doomed by his failures to go backwards rather than forwards, rather in the way of the risible arc of action described by Wernher's anti-hero, and the remainder of his life is dominated more by images of psychological reversion than of chivalric progress. This is particularly apparent in the *Salle aux Images* sections where he attempts to re-create his lost Cornish arcadia through an adoration of statues of Isolde and others from his past life. Unable to establish a satisfactory alternative life in Breton exile, he remains emotionally shackled to the mute effigies of Isolde and other actors in his former life. The failure to resolve this issue in the manner of his Arthurian peers leads to a degeneration of Tristan's psychological and moral person, seen most remarkably in the paranoid delusion that Isolde might be enjoying a sexually fulfilled life with Marke:

> Sis corages mue sovent,
> E pense molt diversement
> Cum changer puisse sun voleir,
> Quant sun desir ne puit aveir,
> E dit dunc: 'Ysolt bele amie,
> Molt diverse [la] nostre vie.
> La nostre amur tant se deservre
> Qu'ele n'est fors pur mei decevre:
> Jo perc pur vos joie et deduit,
> E vos l'avez e jur et nuit;
> Jo main ma vie en grant dolur,
> E vos vostre en delit d'amur.' (*Tristran*, ed. by Gregory, lines 54–65)

[His mind was ever changing as he thought of the various ways he might redirect his body's desire, now he was unable to have the object of his longing. And then he said: 'Yseut, fair love, our lives are poles apart. The life of love we lead is so different that, for me, love is a delusion. For you I renounce all joy and delight, yet you have them by day and night. The life I live is one of great sorrow, but yours is given to the pleasures of love.']

Similar sentiments are found in Tristan's bitter words in the German version[40] where, in another inversion of 'Arthurian' ethics, Tristan's baseless slurs on

[39] 'Das arthurische Strukturmuster ist also im *Tristan* intertextuell, d.h. im Sinne eines impliziten Dialogs mit dem ihm verpflichteten Typus präsent. Man bringt das arthurische Muster zum Bewussstsein, um es zugleich zu demontieren': Haug, 'Der *Tristan* – eine interarthurische Lektüre', p. 64.

[40] 'die fröude, diech durch iuch verbir, | owê, owê, die tribet ir | als ofte, als iu gevellet. | ir sît dar zuo gesellet: | Marke, iuwer herre und ir, ir sît | heime unde gesellen ale zît; | sô bin ich fremede und eine' (*Tristan*, ed. by Ranke, lines 19489–95; The joy that I forgo because of you, woe — you

his lover's character place him in opposition to courtly codes and bring him as close to clinical madness as anywhere else in the earlier Tristan tradition.[41] His suspicions at any rate do little justice to the moral condition of a woman who describes herself in her relationship with Marke as 'completely dead to the depths of my heart' ('reht innerhalb des herzen tôt', line 18553). Such a confusional state on the part of the protagonist is not without precedent in courtly narratives (one thinks of *Iwein* or the eponymous hero of Konrad von Stoffeln's *Gauriel von Muntabel*), but whilst Iwein, Gauriel, and even Erec may be said to suffer temporary symptoms of physical and mental disorientation,[42] the preconceived, teleological structure of their biographies ensures that they recover from their psychological maladies. Tristan stands out against that tradition by his inability to make a like recovery. Written against the grain of the Arthurian narratives, a polemical thrust reveals itself in the choice to foreground the irremediable absurdity of the lovers' plight over against the harmonious closures of the Arthurian romances.[43]

The Tristan romances have no truck with euphemistic efforts to lead their protagonist away from destruction on an upward path to moral and social rehabilitation. Tristan's tortured awareness of the philtre as a psychological force capable of countermanding the rational part of his mind epitomizes his plight in his Breton exile. His *raisun* dictates to him that the way to escape the misfortunes of his past is to forge a new life for himself among the Armorican knights. To this end he tirelessly builds up his knightly credibility in armed combat. Yet his involuntary

indulge in as often as you please. You are well placed to take advantage of this sexual opportunity. Mark, your lord and yourself, are at home and together all the time whereas I am a solitary outcast).

[41] 'It is clear that Tristran attempts, through his marriage to Isolde of the White Hands, to dispel that kind of love normally termed courtly. That tension of desire, which is the very stuff of the troubadours' love, is deliberately dissipated for the purpose of obtaining relief and in the hope of forgetting the queen' (Tony Hunt, 'The Significance of Thomas's *Tristan*', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 7 (1981), 41–61 (p. 50).

[42] See Rodney Fisher, 'Aspects of Madness in Hartmann's *Erec*', *Seminar*, 34 (1998), 221–34.

[43] Gottfried's English translator certainly thought so, contending that the German author was tacitly entering the lists with the writers of the Arthurian genre: 'Gottfried of course presents chivalry as a splendid ideal; but in action it is shorn of glory. Instead, he gives us shrewd calculation [...] the stress is on tactics [...]. In his story the archangels do not invisibly lay low thousands for the hero at a flourish of his sword, as in crusading narratives. As to Arthurian romance, we may assume that Gottfried had seen through its follies, for he steers clear of them all. Thomas places Tristran a generation later than Arthur and Gottfried does nothing to change this' (*'Tristan', with the Surviving Fragments of the 'Tristran' of Thomas*, ed. and trans. by A. T. Hatto (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), Introduction, p. 12.

failure to consummate his marriage is seen to annul his efforts in the knightly arena when the 'bold water' incident reveals to Kaherdin that his sister is still a virgin. Whereas the heroes of the Arthurian romances are able to use their increase of experience to rectify their faults, *Tristan* shows the hero's rational faculties to be foiled by deeper forces articulated through the inexhaustible symbolism of the philtre.

By his choice of subject matter, Gottfried appears to have deemed his literary competitors' works in the Arthurian genre rather too sentimentally optimistic. If we accept *Parzival* as being an albeit inchoate form of Bildungsroman, then *Tristan* must be judged to have been based on an opposing template. In comparing the biographies of Parzival and Tristan we might talk of a narrative chiasmus in which the initially more sophisticated Tristan passes Parzival on his way down his particular Wheel of Fortune. The Tristan legend, read in tandem with the Arthurian romances, gives the lie to Novalis's famous but misguided assertion made in *Die Christenheit oder Europa* that the 'ages of faith' shared a more or less unified world view. On the contrary, it appears that there was more often than not in the early thirteenth century a dialogic cacophony representing sharply divided perceptions in individual philosophies. Gottfried, seemingly unimpressed by the providentialist notions subtending the works of peers writing in the Arthurian genre, appears to have chosen subject matter mischievously calculated to draw attention to the comic limitations of the kind of literary constructions of knighthood favoured by literary peers.

This subversive stance often leads to Chaucerian forms of laughter such as we find in the *Canterbury Tales* when the uncouth Miller obtrudes himself upon the company in advance of the Monk and insists on telling his story of 'harlotrie' in wilful contradistinction to the 'gentillesse' characterizing the preceding *Knight's Tale*. Despite Chaucer's apologetic preface,[44] the purpose of the mischievous positioning of this bawdiest of the tales must have been to 'deliberately affront the code of manners and the courtly standards respected throughout *The Knight's Tale*'.[45] *Tristan* is no less rich in *fabliau* elements than Chaucer, and their function is equally subversive in the case of the German work. In the notorious 'cuckolded

[44] Chaucer expresses himself thus in his aside to his audience: 'Blameth nat me if that ye chese amis. | The Millere is a cherl, ye knowe wel this; | So was the Reve eek and othere mo, | And harlotrie they tolden bothe two. | Aviseth yow, and put me out of blame; | And eek man shal nat maken ernest of game' (Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Miller's Tale*, ed. by James Winny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 'Miller's Prologue', lines 73–78).

[45] Chaucer, *Miller's Tale*, ed. by Winny, p. 2.

husband' episode, the lovers trick Marke into believing that his wife is a virgin by substituting the genuinely virginal Brangaene for Isolde in his bed, a ruse which (however improbably) succeeds in convincing Marke of his wife's virtue.[46] Even God himself appears to be hoodwinked when Isolde is said to enlist the help of Christ (described in derisive terms as being 'as pliant as a windblown sleeve')[47] to help her convince Marke of her innocence by allowing her to hold the red hot iron unscathed. These scurrilous episodes, in common with those found in medieval *fabliaux* across Europe, are titillating exemplifications of how the unscrupulous may defy the shibboleths of the 'official' culture of their day,[48] but beyond their broad-brush comedy they possess a more subtly disquieting dimension.

Particularly disturbing is the fact that, although the lovers are temporarily able to defy both secular and divine arms of the law, the greatest trick, it is hinted, is played on the lovers themselves by the inherent 'crookedness' of the cosmos. In what has been described as a 'Paradebeispiel einer Verkettung von unglücklichen Umständen' (unexampled concatenation of misfortunes)[49] one could adduce a variety of possible causes for the potion episode (the wind and waves causing the boats to stop in the inlet, the inexperienced maid, or the negligence of Brangaene, official guardian of the potion). Yet Brangaene, whilst accepting full responsibility for her lack of oversight of the potion brewed by the old Irish queen, attributes ultimate responsibility to a higher cause:

> Brangaene sprach: 'daz riuwe got,
> Daz der vâlant sînen spot
> mit uns alsus gemachet hat!' (*Tristan*, ed. by Ranke, lines 12127–29)

[Brangaene said: 'I protest to God that the devil has been able to mock us in this way!']

This is a typically medieval formulation reminiscent of a passage in Hartmann von Aue's *Der Arme Heinrich* where Heinrich, lord of the manor, is stricken with leprosy. His feudal dependents ascribe his affliction (with apparent piety) to an 'act

[46] 'in [Marke] dûhte wîp alse wîp | er vant ouch die vil schiere | von guoter maniere: | ime was ein als ander, | an ietwederre vander | golt under messinc. | ouch leistens im ir teidinc | also san und alsô dar, | daz er nie nihtes wart gewar' (*Tristan*, ed. by Ranke, lines 12670–78; To Mark one woman seemed just like any other — he found gold and brass in equal measure in all of them, and she did her duty by him there and then, so that he had no inkling [that it was not the first Isolde lying in his bed]).

[47] 'wintschaffen alse ein ermel' (*Tristan*, ed. by Ranke, line 15740).

[48] For discussion of this point, see Brewer's Introduction to *Medieval Comic Tales*.

[49] Haug, 'Aventiure', p. 116.

of God' but subjoin a Parthian shot whose logic is not difficult to decode: 'Had it been anybody else who had caused our lord's leprosy, we would curse him roundly' ('got der hât in uns benomen: | hêt ez iemen anders getân, | der müese unsern fluoch hân').[50] Similarly, Brangaene puts the blame on the Devil, but behind the Devil in her mind stands the authority against whom she dares level only a veiled accusation, God himself. Although the identity of the ultimate cause may remain properly veiled, the suggestion of divine causation, perhaps even of cosmic laughter, is hardly to be ruled out.[51] The protagonists of the Thomas/Gottfried version fall to ultimately unknowable forces which lead them to an invincibly absurd plight and a tragic death which, *pace* Wagner, does not point to a sublime consummation beyond the grave.[52] In its repeated use of oxymoron (used frequently to dilate on the 'bitter sweetness' of the lovers' lives), its resigned fatalism and frequent anticipations of the tragic *finale* of the lovers' lives, *Tristan* seems to point backwards to the fatalistic spirit of the *Nibelungenlied* with its vanishingly low expectations of human felicity rather than forward to that of the (over-)optimistic and hence arguably foolish courtly culture.[53]

[50] Hartmann von Aue, *Der Arme Heinrich*, ed. and trans. by Helmut de Boor (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1985), lines 506–08. It was only with the upsurge of proto-humanist ideas preceding the composition of *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen* (*c.* 1400) that God would be directly arraigned for a privation (here in the form of the death of a peasant farmer's wife).

[51] 'Man beachte, dass dabei auch noch über den *valant* [Teufel] auf Gott zurückgegangen wird, der das alles zugelassen habe, wodurch sich Ansatz und Verantwortung noch mehr im Unabwägbaren verlieren': Haug, 'Aventiure', p. 116.

[52] 'No Christian optimism lightens the conclusion of the Thomas fragments. There is no indication that the lovers are to achieve redemption by being admitted into the eternal life. When Iseult calls upon God in the storm she beseeches him, unrepentantly, to grant the lovers a continuing *earthly* existence with little thought for their immortal souls': Geoffrey Bromiley, *Thomas's* '*Tristan*' *and the* '*Folie Tristan d'Oxford*' (London: Grant and Cutler, 1986), pp. 74–75.

[53] 'Wie Gottfried beschreibt auch Wolfram im *Titurel* die Aporie einer christlichen Ritterkunst und ihrer Moral- und Menschenauffassung, die wohl in der besonderen Erfahrung der historischen Entwicklungen seit der Wende zum 13. Jahrhundert begründet liegt, und die in Deutschland, man vergleiche etwa das *Nibelungenlied*, nicht mehr ritterlich-optimistisch erlebt werden konnte': Michael Dallapiazza, 'Männlich-Weiblich: Bilder des Scheiterns in Gottfrieds *Tristan* und Wolframs *Titurel*', in *Arthurian Romance and Gender*, ed. by Friedrich Wolfzettel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 176–82 (p. 182).

Don't Make Me Laugh! Fooling Around in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Lucy Perry

The laughter, the speeches, and the gestures that colour the narrative of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* have provided much material for commentators and have been central to the unravelling of the meaning of this text.[1] Moments of laughter are pervasive from the opening Yuletide celebrations as jovial sounds resound in the hall during the Christmas games and gift-giving. The Green Knight laughs as the knights of the court hesitate to accept his challenge of taking his axe and striking a blow at him. Arthur is a jovial king, brushing aside the awful spectacle of the Green Knight as a jest appropriate to Christmas. A year later, the court of Camelot rejoices with laughter at Gawain's safe return, taking lightly his confession of failure. Sir Bercilak's Castle Hautdesert too is full of laughter.

The narrative structure is founded on two games, the Beheading Game and the Exchange of Winnings. The serious nature of the Beheading Game is apparent, but the Exchange of Winnings, where little seems at stake in the first instance, proves itself to be potentially just as deadly.[2] The opposition of laughter and earnestness

[1] Robert Longsworth, 'Interpretative Laughter in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Philological Quarterly*, 70 (1991), 141–47. Martin Stevens, 'Laughter and Game in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Speculum*, 47 (1972), 65–78. J. A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 136–55. Guillemette Bolens, *Le Style des gestes: corporéité et kinésie dans le récit littéraire* (Lausanne: Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Médecine et de la Santé, 2008), chap. 4, 'La Face et les ambiguïtées de l'exploit: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', pp. 97–128.

[2] For further discussions on the gaming element in the poem, see Victoria L. Weiss, 'The Play World and the Real World: Chivalry in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Philological Quarterly*, 72 (1993), 403–18; Henk Aertsen, 'Game and Earnest in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in

that is inherent to the games is one of many important thematic antitheses: public and private, interior and exterior, 'blysse and blunder' (line 18; joy and trouble), *trawþe* ('truth') and *untrawþe* ('perfidy').[3] The multivalency of laughter therefore underscores suspense and tension in the poem.

In a combination of voice, gesture, and laughter, performative and ritualized human interaction is explored through a genre which is itself dependent on ritual. The pretext of romance is the interaction of players enacting predefined roles: protagonist hero, antagonist, and intermediary lady. These predefined roles are brought to the fore in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the description of the court of Camelot moments before the occurrence of the shocking spectacle it will witness. Men and women return from the celebration of Mass to play Christmas games which apparently call for flirtatious gestures, possibly exchanging kisses as well as gifts in the gift-giving, a game where the losers would have to give a kiss to the victor ('Ladies la3ed ful loude, þo3 þay lost haden', line 69; ladies laughed aloud although they had lost). The seating at the banquet is conventional with Guinevere arrayed between Arthur's nephews, Agravain and Gawain. Even the ritual of Arthur's requiring a spectacle before he will join the banquet is retained. The poet's negotiation with the rituals of romance is made explicit, and the human subject is foregrounded through gesture and voice. Laughter provides commentary.

In a humorous and entertaining mode of narration the poet tackles the deadly serious topic of the meaning of truth, *trawþe*. Many other themes that would come under the category of courtly manners (courtesy and chivalry) are subsumed to this investigation. The humanity of the *Gawain* poet is crucial to his engagement with the story and exploration of these themes. His engagement with the human subject is demonstrated in the second fitt by his greater attention to emotive and sensory details than to Gawain's triumphs in encounters with extraordinary beasts and beings during his quest. The description of Gawain's exposure to the freezing winter elements, as he sleeps in his armour with icicles hanging from the rocks above, is enough to provoke goose flesh in any reader. This builds on the sense of foreboding

Companion to Middle English Romance, ed. by Henk Aertsen and Alasdair A. MacDonald (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), pp. 83–100; Gloria Torrini-Roblin, '"Gomen" and "Gab": Two Models for Play in Medieval Literature', *Romance Philology*, 38 (1984), 32–40.

[3] All quotations are from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd edn, ed. by Norman Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967). My translations draw upon the glossary to this edition and suggestions made by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), pp. 207–390.

felt by his companions of the court who wept as he went on his way, questioning the sense in having such a man as Gawain go to his death by beheading from an elvish man and believing the game to have become far too serious: 'Who knew euer any kyng such counsel to take | As kny3tez in cauelaciounz on Crystmasse gomnez!' (lines 682–83; Who knew any king ever to take such counsel as that of knights in trivial disputes over Christmas games!). Such tension underlies the poet's sense of humour which too is engaging, as we laugh and smile in response to witticisms of both the narrator and his characters, to funny moments, such as the knights of Camelot kicking the Green Knight's head around under the table where it rolled, before they realize the Green Knight is still alive and standing. To be sure, this humour is crucial to how an audience or reader responds to the twists and turns of the narrative. The ritualized performativity of romance, enhanced by suspense, humour, emotive and sensual descriptions and interactions, prompt an engagement with the major themes.

The contemporary audience of *Sir Gawain* would come to the poem in the context of a body of French Arthurian romances, which by the time *Sir Gawain* was written had been adapted and translated into several European vernacular languages. The voice of the narrator of *Sir Gawain* either challenges the expectations and assumptions of his audience or invites collusion from a sophisticated audience. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* might therefore be viewed as a literary critique which demands a responsive audience. Collusion might come in the form of recognition of a discourse on the level of metanarrative, for example, in the allusion to Gawain's reputation (from French romances) as a lover. During Gawain's sojourn in the court of Castle Hautdesert much is made of his reputation, particularly in the private conversations between the Lady of Hautdesert and the protagonist, in the course of which she remarks upon his renown for courtesy and chivalry and comments upon the chivalric code:

> And of alle cheualry to chose, þe chef þyng alosed
> Is þe lel layk of luf, þe lettrure of armes;
> For to telle of þis teuelyng of þis trwe kny3tez,
> Hit is þe tytelet token and tyxt of her werkkez,
> How ledes for her lele luf hor lyuez han auntered. (lines 1512–16)

[And conspicuous among the whole code of chivalry, the chief thing praised is the faithful practice of love, the very doctrine of knighthood; for, speaking of the deeds of true knights, it is the inscribed title and the text of their works, how men for their faithful love have risked their lives.]

Love is defined as the impetus for knightly deeds. But the illusion that knightly acts are secure within the narrative world proves fragile as textuality rather than

narrative shapes the Lady's argument. Indeed, the pun on the word 'werkkes' (referring to both '"deeds" and "(literary) works" — i.e. romances of chivalry', as Andrew and Waldron set forth[4]) disorientates us yet further. Gawain's response fits with the modesty that he demonstrates from the moment he accepts the challenge at Camelot, asserting that he would not take it upon himself 'to trwluf expoun. | And towche þe temez of tyxt and talez of armez' (lines 1540–41; to expound upon true-love and to treat of themes of stories and tales of chivalry) to one that obviously is so much more skilled in the art: that would be 'a folé felefolde' (line 1545; a manifold folly). Gawain's sustaining the playful discourse initiated by the lady brings ironic undertones to his conventional modesty. Such a characterization of Sir Gawain invites, urges even, the audience to engage with the metanarrative.

Rather than the relationship between the lady and Sir Gawain, the subject of this volume provides me with an opportunity to explore afresh the interaction of Sir Gawain with Sir Bercilak and his alter ego the Green Knight, as I revisit the idea of the Green Knight as trickster, evoking the character of the Fool. I especially wish to re-examine the dialogue between the Green Knight and Sir Gawain in the final fitt, once the foolish games are over and the Green Knight has delivered his final blow to Sir Gawain. When Gawain first arrives at their final meeting-place, the Green Chapel, a craggy mound overgrown by grass, an evil-looking 'oritore' (oratory), he thinks it a suitable place for the 'wy3e wruxled in grene' (the man clad in green) to do his devil worship (lines 2190–92). Gawain demonstrates in these thoughts that he categorizes the Green Knight as something demonic. Yet, finally, in the union of the alter ego the Green Knight with the primary ego Sir Bercilak, the antagonist's roles as devilish trickster and congenial tester merge to the point of confusion, perhaps to the point of foolishness. Moreover, Gawain invokes man as fool in his response to the Green Knight's revelations when he admits to having compromised the code of chivalry. Foolishness throughout is an important point of reference in the interaction of the protagonist and the antagonist, but it is brought to the fore in the scene at the Green Chapel. Invoking the figure of the fool as a way of reading might provide some further illumination on the strategic discourse and the gestures of the Green Knight and Sir Gawain in Fitt 4.

[4] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Andrew and Waldron, p. 263, notes to 1512–16 render this: 'and from among the whole (code) of chivalry, the thing principally praised is the faithful practice of love, the very doctrine of knighthood, for to speak of the striving of true knights, it is the rubric written at the head of their works, and the very words themselves'.

The fool is available to poet-narrator, characters, and audience, providing a point of reference both diegetically in the world of the narrative and extradiegetically in the communication between the poet and his implied audience. Sandra Billington in the *Social History of the Fool* demonstrates that a theological and moralizing lead is apparent in medieval attitudes to the fool, as the innocent is welcomed into the community of Christ, while the artificial fool, one who mimics idiocy for payment, is treated with suspicion and whose activities and games are presumed to have a devilish source.[5] Such fool-games are the basis of Christ's torture in the Mystery plays concerning the Passion, particularly in the Wakefield Master's *Coliphizacio* (Townley 21), The Buffeting, in which the torturers regard their activities as a Yule-tide game, and Christ a 'fond foyll' (line 343).[6] In the Passion plays, as Billington elaborates, both tortured and torturers become fools as the figure of Christ is moved into a position beside Pilate that provides a tableau of the manuscript illuminations of Psalters, of the fool alongside the king. The torturers 'are *stulti* and Christ is the innocent spirit of Christianity which, though it appears the weakest of forces, overthrows worldly power represented by the torturers'.[7]

The day that the Green Knight enters Camelot is 1 January, traditionally the day of the Feast of Fools.[8] Christmas provided the season for fool games and was the occasion for interludes and other such festivities, as Arthur states after the departure of the Green Knight, head in hand, rather than fixed to his neck:

> Wel bycommes such craft vpon Cristmasse,
> Laykyng of enterludez, to laȝe and to syng,
> Among þise kynde caroles of knyȝtez and ladyez. (lines 471–73)

[Such craft is quite appropriate at Christmas, playing of interludes, laughing and singing, among the proper dances and songs of knights and ladies.]

A group of players, the mummers, would take advantage of this seasonal spirit and visit courts uninvited and disguised, playing tricks and games. Frederick B. Jonassen draws an analogy between the visit of the Green Knight to Arthur's court and such visits of mummers. He relates the activities of medieval mummers to modern

[5] Sandra Billington, *A Social History of the Fool* (Brighton: Harvester; New York: St Martin's, 1984), pp. 20–25.

[6] Billington, *Social History of the Fool*, p. 18. I refer here to *The Buffeting* in *English Mystery Plays*, ed. by Peter Happé (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp. 465–83, line 43 (p. 479).

[7] Billington, *Social History of the Fool*, p. 18.

[8] Henry L. Savage, '*The Feast of Fools* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 51 (1952), 537–44.

Mumming plays in order to locate elements of folk tradition which resonate through *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[9] Two types of Mumming play concern Jonassen: the 'Hero-Combat Play', often called the 'St George Play', and the Sword Dance. In both there is a killing. In the former, 'either the Saint George character or his opponent is killed, and a comic doctor is then called in to cure the slain warrior'. In the Sword Dance, the dancers would be 'accompanied by a clown or grotesque often called a Fool, Tommy or Bess'. The victim of a choreographed action which is understood to represent a beheading is usually the Fool or grotesque.[10] Such violence and aggression in modern Mumming plays might have some parallel in the actions of medieval mummers who, disguised and anonymous, could 'behave outrageously or outlandishly'. They would be 'outside of their own society and outside of the social code to which they are usually subject'.[11] The Green Knight's entire behaviour and ambivalent presentation — his strange appearance, his flouting the rules of etiquette, his threats and insults, the ambivalent game he proposes, which, Jonassen remarks, presents 'prospects of foolishness and death'[12] — may be regarded as falling within the role of a fool, just as Jonassen proposes that the ambivalence of the Green Knight might be explained by seeing his role as that of a mummer: both frightful and comic, a fool or a demon.[13] A fool and foolish behaviour, in medieval theological thinking, could be either devilish, if artificial, or Godly, if innocent and authentic. The artifice of the Green Knight is identified both in Arthur's words ('such craft') and in the revelations of the final fitt. The Green Knight seems to be allied with the Devil.

When the Green Knight offers the challenge, although he does not name the Beheading Game, this is what is understood. On one side, Arthur advises Gawain that if he deals with the challenger properly he will survive the blow that shall be due to him in return (lines 373–74), and, on the other side, the Green Knight lifts his hair to reveal his neck in preparation for the strike of the axe. The opening fitt of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* therefore establishes the paradox of the Beheading Game, which under normal circumstances would not allow a rematch. This is one of many paradoxes in the poem that leads David Baker to argue 'that

[9] Frederick B. Jonassen, 'Elements from the Traditional Drama of England in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Viator*, 17 (1986), 221–54 (pp. 223–24).

[10] Jonassen, 'Elements from the Traditional Drama of England', pp. 223–24.

[11] Jonassen, 'Elements from the Traditional Drama of England', p. 229.

[12] Jonassen, 'Elements from the Traditional Drama of England', p. 230.

[13] Jonassen, 'Elements from the Traditional Drama of England', p. 237.

the Gawain-poet uses paradox to investigate the ability of language to communicate truth spiritually, socially, and logically, and especially to question the acceptance of [linguistic and literary] hierarchies'. He further states that 'paradoxes usually contain one particular element: self-reference', so he explores 'ideas, themes, and symbols that turn back upon themselves, refer to themselves, or contain themselves'.[14] The Green Knight himself is a paradox. His paradox is symbolized in his carrying a holly branch, indicating peace, as well as a symbol of war, the axe. As Baker elaborates he disturbs the social hierarchy of the court. We are often confronted by paradox and self-reference in fools and foolish behaviour. Indeed, the medieval idea of a fool informed by scripture and exegesis and underscored by the exultation of God's creation suggests that a fool is himself a paradox, while his words and his gestures destabilize established hierarchies.

The outlandish appearance of the Green Knight, not only green in dress, but green in the colour of his hair and his skin and riding a horse that is green, might be seen analogously with the importance applied to fools' costumes.[15] Costume signals difference, but it is also the words and gestures of the Green Knight, his behaviour when he enters the court, that set him apart from those who inhabit the court, Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. He signals his scorn of the court (sneering at its youth) by entering upon his horse and refusing to recognize the King, whom, once identified, he addresses discourteously. The visitor embodies contradiction for while his appearance and gestures are threatening, he states that he is only seeking a Christmas game, and he points to the holly bob which he carries, which signifies the peaceful nature of his errand (lines 265–66).

The initial response of the court to the Green Knight's challenge is astonishment ('If he hem stowned vpon fyrst, stiller were þanne | Alle þe heredmen in halle, þe hy3 and þe lo3e', lines 301–02; if he had stunned them at first, then all the courtiers in the hall — every single one — were quieter still). The description of the Green Knight as he looks about waiting for a response to his challenge focuses on his face — the movement of his red eyes, his arched green eyebrows, his beard

[14] David Baker, 'The Gödel in *Gawain*: Paradoxes of Self-Reference and the Problematics of Language in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 32 (2003), 349–66.

[15] D. J. Gifford, 'Iconographical Notes towards a Definition of the Medieval Fool', in *The Fool and the Trickster: Studies in Honour of Enid Welsford*, ed. by Paul V. A. Williams (Cambridge: Brewer; Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield, 1979), pp. 18–35. Derek Brewer, 'The Colour Green', in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 181–90, has pointed out that 'the favourable or neutral connotations of "green" in medieval English far outnumber the unfavourable' (p. 184).

waving — and emphasizes his difference. But his derision towards such a famous court and his loud laughter provoke aggression in Arthur, and his body reacts with an involuntary blush. In his angry retort Arthur draws upon the semantic field of folly in his words, which demonstrates the scorn he has for the Green Knight and his challenge: 'þyn askyng is nys | And as þou foly hatz frayst, fynde þe behoues' (lines 323–24; what you ask is foolish, and since you have asked for folly, obtain it you must).

The most important aspect in the destabilization of hierarchies is the position of the fool in relation to his audience. For a fool's performance to be complete, a reversal of roles is required as the victim becomes the fool. In Gawain's formulaic modesty, he shows due deference to his king: 'I am þe wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest [...] And syþen þis note is so nys þat no3t hit yow falles' (lines 354, 358; I am the weakest, I know, and most feeble in my wit [...] And since this business is so foolish it should not fall to you). Jonassen regards that at this point 'Gawain ironically takes on [the role of the Fool of the Sword Dance], he is the individual who faces the prospect of losing his head'.[16] This reversal is consolidated in the final fitt of our story when the Green Knight assumes the role of judge. As fool he identifies weakness in others, which establishes these others as fools. The Green Knight acting as judge delivers a verdict that, by keeping the girdle, 'yow lakked a lyttel, sir, lewté yow wonted' (line 2366; you were at fault a little, sir, and you fell short in fidelity). Since he was only lacking in fidelity in as much as he cared for his own life, Gawain keeps his head. But it is not the Green Knight that declares Gawain a fool, but Gawain himself.

Suffering the fatigue of a winter journey, Gawain takes his rest at Castle Haut-desert, and there he and the lord of the castle strike a bargain to exchange their gains of the day. On three consecutive days the host goes hunting while Gawain stays to recover from his arduous journey. He is visited at dawn by the host's wife who tries to seduce him and from whom Gawain receives kisses. These kisses Gawain exchanges with his host in accordance with the deal struck, while concealing, he believes, the original donor. He conceals too on his final day a girdle, a green silk belt, which the host's wife has given him and which she declares will save his life when he meets the Green Knight.

At the Green Chapel, when Gawain has received and survived the blow from the axe, his first response is to draw his sword and to warn the Green Knight to

[16] Jonassen, 'Elements from the Traditional Drama of England', p. 236.

cease, for any further attempt to strike would bring retaliation. The Green Knight makes it quite clear he intends no further fighting action, as he stands his axe on the ground and rests on it, pleased and impressed by the sight of the now fearless Gawain (lines 2331–35). He speaks cheerfully (line 2336), and it is now that Gawain learns that the Green Knight is in fact the Lord of Hautdesert. The Green Knight reveals that each swing of the axe is linked to each day of the Exchange of Winnings and that he knows everything about the concealed girdle that Gawain failed to exchange. Gawain's mortification shows in the blood rushing to his face, as he shudders within and winces from shame (lines 2370–73), involuntary bodily responses that recall his wincing earlier at the approaching axe. The involuntary overrides ritual so that the private is revealed.

Derek Pearsall remarks that 'in chivalric culture and literature, what exists only in private does not exist, and it only begins to exist, and to be a cause of shame, if it is made public'.[17] The Green Knight reveals to Gawain the inconsistencies between his public identity and his private self, 'the disunity of his personality, he is "ashamed of himself"'.[18] The Green Knight has not only disturbed the hierarchies of the court but caused Gawain to reflect upon his own personal contradictions. In Fitt 1 Gawain maintains the hierarchies of the court. When he asks permission of his king to take the challenge, he does so courteously and with humility.[19] Whereas in Fitt 1 his role as fool was part of the ritual of performance, now Gawain truly feels foolish after the act, and curses the vices that have unmasked his inconsistent self, evoking cowardice and covetousness:[20]

[17] Derek Pearsall, 'Courtesy and Chivalry in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: The Order of Shame and the Invention of Embarrassment', in *Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. by Brewer and Gibson, pp. 351–62 (p. 358).

[18] Pearsall,'Courtesy and Chivalry', pp. 360–62.

[19] Jonassen, 'Elements from the Traditional Drama of England', p. 236.

[20] Richard Newhauser, 'The Meaning of Gawain's Greed', *Studies in Philology*, 87 (1990), 410–26, explains Gawain's coupling of the sin of avarice with cowardice by turning to Augustine of Hippo's sermon 107 delivered in 411, which takes the theme Luke 12. 15: 'I say to you: beware of every kind of avarice' (pp. 422–23), and which specifies *avaritia vitae*, the coveting of one's own life: 'Do not have a greed for living and you will not have eternal death' (*Sermo* 107, 9.10 (*PL*, 38, col. 632), cited by Newhauser, p. 425). Newhauser states further that Bercilak's and Gawain's interpretations of the events differ: Bercilak's view is contractual or legal, while Gawain 'emphasizes the moral nature of his faults [and] for this reason their understanding of the nature of the crime differs sharply. For Bercilak the love of life is understandable; for Gawain it is tantamount to an act of *avaritia vitae* and is, thus, central to his breach of virtuous knighthood' (p. 426).

> 'Corsed worth cowarddyse and couetyse boþe!
> In yow is vylany and vyse þat vertue disstryez.'
> Þenne he ka3t to þe knot, and þe kest lawsez,
> Brayde broþely þe belt to þe burne seluen. (lines 2374–77)

['Cursed be both cowardice and covetousness! In you are villainy and vice that destroys virtue.' Then he laid hold of the knot and undid the fastening, and flung the belt fiercely to the knight himself.]

He is aggressive in both his words and his actions, flinging the belt to Bercilak.[21] The rhetoric of his speech allows him to locate any blame in abstractions. His faults are not innate to him, they are external, brought upon him by the vices to which he has fallen foul.[22] But he finally has to admit his own dishonesty and lack of integrity.

> Lo! þer þe falssyng, foule mot hit falle!
> For care of þy knokke cowardyse me ta3t
> To acorde me with couetyse, my kynde to forsake,
> Þat is larges and lewté þat longez to kny3tez.
> Now am I fawty and falce, and ferde haf ben euer
> Of trecherye and vntrawþe: boþe bityde sor3e
> and care! (lines 2378–84)

[Look, there is the breaking of faith, bad luck to it! Out of worry of your blow, cowardice directed me to associate with covetousness, to abandon my natural character, which is generosity and loyalty, which befit knights. Now I am lacking integrity and dishonest, I who have always been afraid of treachery and perfidy.]

[21] For discussions of the meaning of the green girdle, see, for example, Ralph Hanna III, 'Unlocking What's Locked: Gawain's Green Girdle', *Viator*, 14 (1983), 289–302; Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the 'Gawain'-Poet: Description and the Act of Perception* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 'The Gaze in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', pp. 96–115 (pp. 110–11). The girdle as fetish is discussed by Gayle Margherita, *The Romance of Origins: Language and Sexual Difference in Middle English Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp. 145–46.

[22] We might too recall the characterization of vices as fools in the later sixteenth-century morality plays; the Vices play the Fool in *Mankind*, as Billington describes: 'Another aspect of the evil associated with the artificial Fool leads to the origin of the name "Vice" for the leading character, who is frequently malevolent, in later sixteenth-century Morality plays. [...] he was already a well-known social entertainer. Just as the early evidence shows the Fool as leader of the games and dances the Vice is made leader of the scripted action, until his demise. The dress of the alter Vices was varied but I agree with Mares, also, on the point that until about 1550 the Vice wore Fool's dress' (Billington, *Social History of the Fool*, pp. 25–26, citing F. H. Mares, 'The Origin of the Figure Called the Vice', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 22 (1958), 11–29 (p. 11)).

This scene is quite clearly a reflection of the confession that Gawain performed before he left Castle Hautdesert, this time complete with restitution of the offending article.[23] Bercilak meets his gesture and his words in a friendly if ironic manner, as he puts aside the foolish roleplay for congenial confessor. The aggression of Gawain subsides with an important gesture, as he removes his helmet, declining nevertheless the invitation to return to Hautdesert to be reconciled with the Host's wife. His polite refusal is marked by emphatic and ironic language, stating that he had stayed long enough, 'he ȝelde hit yow ȝare þat ȝarkkez al menskes!' (line 2410; may he that ordains all honour repay you for it!). What follows in the speech is a much discussed diatribe.

> Bot hit is no ferly þaȝ a fole madde,
> And þurȝ wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorȝe,
> For so watz Adam in erde with one bygyled,
> And Salamon with fele sere, and Samson eftsonez —
> Dalyda dalt hym hys wyrde — and Dauyth þerafter
> Watz blended with Barsabe, þat much bale þoled.
> Now þese were wrathed wyth her wyles, hit were a wynne huge
> To luf hom wel, and leue hem not, a leude þat couþe.
> For þes wer forne þe freest, þat folȝed alle þe sele
> Exellently of alle þyse oþer, vnder heuenryche
> þat mused;
> And alle þay were biwyled
> With wymmen þat þay vsed.
> Þaȝ I be now bigyled,
> Me þink me burde be excused. (lines 2414–28)

[But it is no wonder if a fool behaves madly and through the wiles of women is brought to grief, for so was Adam actually deceived by one, and Solomon with many and various women, and likewise Samson — Delilah dealt him his fate — and afterwards David was deluded by Bathsheba and suffered much misery. Since these men were brought to disaster by women's trickery, it would be a huge advantage to love them well and not trust them, if a man could. For of all those upon earth who have a mind these men were of old the noblest, those who were pre-eminently favoured by fortune. And they were all deceived by women with whom they consorted. If I am now tricked, it seems to me that I ought to be excused.]

[23] See Gerald Morgan, 'The Validity of Gawain's Confession in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 36 (1985), 1–18, who finds in addition to Gawain's shame in his response to the disclosure a 'willed displeasure for sin committed' rather than 'uncontrolled self-disgust', therefore 'true contrition' (pp. 16–17).

This passage interweaves the semantics of deception and the semantics of foolishness. The verb *beguile* is repeated four times in Gawain's speech. The associated noun, *wiles*, appears twice. In the semantics of foolishness we might include *madden* 'to act or speak foolishly; be weak-minded' (*MED*, 1.c) and perhaps 'mused' (line 2424). *Musen* has a range of meanings: 'to be capable of thinking' (hence Tolkien and Gordon's gloss 'to live') 'to ponder', 'meditate', 'reflect', 'to daydream', and 'to dream idly'. In my choice of translation, 'have a mind', I wish to suggest both the action of desiring and the action of thinking. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron take the sense of the passage to be 'I have mentioned only the most noteworthy examples of the stupefying influence of women on men' (lines 2422–24),[24] thereby bringing it firmly within the matrix of foolishness.

The crux here is whether Gawain's misogyny is in earnest.[25] Interpretations by critics that read this speech as 'a tactful, half-jocular, use of the ecclesiastical commonplace of the "eternal Eve" as a transition to the less impassioned, more urbane, conclusion of the conversation' are trying to make sense of the fact that 'the last line in particular ("me þink me burde be excused"), if taken quite seriously, would contradict everything else [Gawain] says about his own culpability'.[26] In this vein, Andrew and Waldron find the tone of this speech very different to Gawain's initial response to the discovery of his crime. But on the contrary the misogynistic speech is similar in its rhetoric to the speech that names the vices: women are yet another vice to be evoked and condemned. The vices have caused Gawain to become false and fearful, while women befuddle the minds of fools. The positioning of the word 'fool' (line 2414) in subject position provides the logic that fools exist before women: women do not *make* fools of men but to be brought to grief by a woman you *are* a fool. So Adam, Solomon, Samson, David — all these noble, pre-eminent men — were already fools. We might say then that Gawain's defence is that men are fools ripe to be tricked by women.

So where does reading the Green Knight and Gawain in the framework of foolishness lead us? Whilst paradoxes are in nature self-reflexive, Baker argues that the rules must be restored at the end to allow literary resolution. Baker situates this restoration in the last lines of the poem, when we are brought full circle and are

[24] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Andrew and Waldron, p. 295.

[25] For the view that such terms as 'rant' and 'outburst' are inappropriate, see Gerald Morgan, 'Medieval Misogyny and Gawain's Outburst against Women in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Modern Language Review*, 97 (2002), 265–78.

[26] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Andrew and Waldron, p. 296.

reminded of its fictionality, as just one tale among many adventures. The final prayer brings us securely out of the fiction.[27] However, there is an attempt to reconstitute hierarchies before this point, within the world of the narrative, for the characters too cannot exist in paradox. Both Gawain and Bercilak must unravel themselves from the contradictions that characterize them. And this is where Morgan le Faye comes in. She is often said to be introduced as an afterthought, indeed, a source of 'discomfort [...] an inadequate attempt to rationalize or motivate Gawain's adventure'.[28] Morgan's 'late insertion' is a problem. Catherine Batt is troubled by Bercilak's making Morgan a scapegoat, stating that it asks for reassessment of the text's different components.[29] Albeit discomforting, Morgan's function in Fitt 4 is clear. As Burrow states, the blame passing to Morgan allows Bercilak to take on the role of a 'richly human and naturalistic tester', while Morgan is malicious, living up to her reputation as 'notoriously cruel and wicked'.[30] Burrow provides an explanation for Morgan's late appearance as the instigator of the cruel test, as a solution for the poet:

> She is important largely because she frees the poet's hand for other matters by explaining both the method and the motive of the test. Since magic and malice were her two conspicuous attributes in tradition, the poet could allow himself to bottle up in her person all the magic and malice implicit in his old story.[31]

This is all very well, but it silently passes over the gender implications of her inclusion. As Bonnie Lander remarks:

> This scapegoating of women has a broader function within the chivalric system of the romance genre. It assists in enabling the chivalric subject to navigate the conflict of loyalties forced by a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the chivalric social arrangement. Those conflicting loyalties are the homosocial and the heterosexual. The collision of these two states of being — masculine fraternity and the individual subject's adoration of his chosen woman — establishes a constant tension that colours every mode of exchange in courtly literature.[32]

[27] Baker, 'The Gödel in *Gawain*', p. 363.

[28] Margherita, *Romance of Origins*, p. 143.

[29] Catherine Batt, 'Gawain's Antifeminist Rant, the Pentangle, and Narrative Space', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 22, Medieval Narrative Special Number (1992), 117–39.

[30] J. A. Burrow, *A Reading of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).

[31] Burrow, *A Reading*, p. 168.

[32] Bonnie Lander, 'The Convention of Innocence and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight's* Literary Sophisticates', *Parergon*, 24 (2007), 41–66 (p. 63).

Indeed, the playful, flirtatious interaction between Sir Gawain and Lady Bercilak is set against the presence of the old lady. When the old lady is first introduced, long before we learn her identity, she is placed in stark contrast to the beautiful young thing that will spend the dawn hours attempting to seduce our knight. This contrast is emphasized by the alternating description of the two women. The 'auncian' (ancient one) is in the literary tradition of the 'loathly lady', withered ('ȝolȝe'), with 'rugh ronkled chekez þat oþer on rolled' (rough, wrinkled cheeks hanging in loose). The description of the folds of skin leads into the detail of the folds of fabric; the glowing white complexion of the younger is set against the black chin of the older; and the alluring décolleté of the younger provides a contrast with the head-dress of the older, which frames the repulsive vision of her eyes, nose, and 'naked lyppez'. Mention of her short thick body and broad backside completes the picture (lines 948–67).

> More lykkerwys on to lyk
> Watz þat scho hade on lode. (lines 968–69)

[More delicious to taste was the one she had with her.]

Gawain's greeting of these two women is a polite bow to the older, and an embrace to the younger, with courteous words of greeting (lines 972–74). While absolutely proper in terms of social intercourse as Burrow demonstrates, I would not accept entirely, as he does, that 'the gestural distinction that Gawain makes here turns, not on sexual attractiveness, but on perceived status'.[33] It cannot help but bring a smile to the audience as we are told that it is on catching sight of the beautiful one (who returns the look graciously) that Gawain promptly takes leave of the Lord of Haut-desert, approaches the two ladies, and remembers the older woman before his tactile greeting of her younger companion. The dawn visits Gawain receives later might seem awkward, but, as he himself admits, they are not unwelcome. They are a pleasure and bring him 'ese' (line 1539). His making this statement to the lady may belong to codes of politeness, but these meetings undoubtedly distract him and bring relief from the thoughts that play on his mind and oppress him in the lonely hours of the night.

At the Green Chapel, Bercilak and Gawain must complete the bonding that Bercilak has commenced by explaining the game. For the two men to establish an affinity they need to locate the trickery beyond the homosocial arena. Gawain's rant about women's treatment of men prompts this manoeuvre, but while it lets Bercilak off the hook, it still implicates his wife. In fact, she is brought into the

[33] Burrow, *Gestures and Looks*, p. 146.

centre ground of blame. In order to protect his own position in the arena Bercilak must protect his wife from further censure, so he lays the blame on Morgan. Thus he concurs with Gawain on the deceit of women, yet frees his wife from blame. The implication is that Morgan is diabolical and, in sexual encounters with Merlin, she has been able to take advantage of masculine vulnerability in the face of feminine wiles and steal knowledge of his arts. In sending Bercilak in the guise of the Green Knight she aimed to deprive the knights of Arthur's court of their wits, to make them all fools, and also

> For to haf greued Gaynour and gart hir to dy3e
> With glopnyng of þat ilke gome þat gostlych speked
> With his hede in his honde bifore þe hy3e table. (lines 2460–62)

[In order to scare Guinevere and cause her to die out of fright of that man that spoke like a phantom, with his head in his hand before the high table.]

Bercilak, although he is still in his green gear, paradoxically speaks of the Green Knight in the third person, attempting to create yet further distance between the foolish game and himself as Lord of Hautdesert. But the game was deadly serious, to deprive men of their wits and to scare the queen to death. This makes the homely turn of the continuation of the conversation rather hard to bear, as Bercilak invites Gawain back to 'make myry in my hous' (line 2468; to make merry in my house): the invitation includes a chance for Gawain to visit his aunt, Morgan.

Gawain accepts Sir Bercilak's version of events but now must maintain the exclusion of such a perverted woman, so refuses this second invitation, this time without words reported by the narrator. Without words, the gestures are conventional non-vocal communication. Burrow reminds us that Gawain's refusal of the first invitation to return to the castle to spend time with the Lady of Hautdesert is softened by the 'gesture of deferential gratitude for the invitation' as he removes his helmet: 'It is therefore not surprising that, when the two men finally part they should do so with full brotherly ceremony, the *acoler* and *baiser* of French romance.'[34] Bercilak, however, is still in the guise of the Green Knight when he and Gawain embrace and kiss and entrust each other to the Lord (lines 2472–73). The narrator considers worthy of note (even though in the short one-stress line which often provides a tag phrase) that their parting is in the cold (line 2474). The environment, indoors and outdoors, has reflected up until now the mood of the actors: Gawain sets out on his quest in Autumn and suffers the cruelty of the environment as the winter draws in, and his final approach to the Green Chapel is in misty, threatening weather. This parting in the cold wilderness, in the

[34] Burrow, *Gestures and Looks*, p. 154.

diabolical environment of the Green Chapel, suggests superficiality in these formal gestures. The protagonist and his antagonist have found a means to bond, to restore hierarchy and to suppress paradoxes, which brings a resolution and allows them to part without further injury. But to be incorporated into the sinister court of Hautdesert would make nonsense of Gawain's new self-realization. There is only one destination for him, where reincorporation will be ethically grounded, that is the court of King Arthur.

Morgan le Faye is invoked by Bercilak in order to reinstigate the fellowship experienced during the previous few days at Hautdesert. However, this final manoeuvre, like the Beheading Game, fails. As Lawrence Besserman explains, Bercilak has been 'displaced as primary mover' and this rejected invitation diminishes Bercilak's power still further.[35] Indeed, with the anticlimax of no death, this supernatural creature has little control over his own destiny but by his own admission is an instrument in a scheme which ultimately failed — Guinevere did not die of fright as was Morgan's wish — and Bercilak appears foolish, having divested himself of his mystery, in which his power lay. The only mystery that remains is where he went: 'And þe kny3t in þe enker-grene | Whiderwarde-so-euer he wolde' (lines 2477–78; And the knight in the bright green went wheresoever he wished). He is not the Green Knight, but the knight *in* green, emphasizing the pure costume of his appearance: he *is* the fool.

If both Gawain and the Green Knight are fools, one is left with the question, where might the norm be found by which behaviour is judged? It is not in the court of Camelot, as the Green Knight has demonstrated. Nor is it in the household of Bercilak, which endorses the foolish world.[36] If the norm then cannot be located in the narrative of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, it lies in a textual world beyond the poem, in the metanarratives, in an imagined, ideal world of the narrative. Through the meeting of the two courts, we are confronted by the truth that our Arthurian heroes fail to live up to a famed, exemplary nature. Indeed, Gawain's fame has travelled before him, and the household of Hautdesert delight in his company:

> And alle þe men in þat mote maden much joye
> To apere in his presense prestly þat tyme,
> þat alle prys and prowes and pured þewes
> Apendes to hys persoun, and praysed is euer. (lines 910–13)

[35] Lawrence Besserman, 'The Idea of the Green Knight', *English Literary History*, 53 (1986), 219–39 (p. 225).

[36] See, for a discussion of the presentation of the two courts, H. Bergner, 'The Two Courts: Two Modes of Existence in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *English Studies*, 5 (1986), 401–16.

> [And all the men in that castle were delighted to be promptly in the presence of one to whose personage appertains such fame and prowess and refined manners and who is always praised.]

However, the prevailing mode of the interaction is ironic, as the discourse of the lady demonstrates. The audience were in Fitt 2 introduced to Gawain as one who was bound by the virtues symbolized in the pentangle which are subsumed to *trawþ*, but we learn that in the world of Hautdesert it is principally his courtly manners and his 'luf-talkyng' that are valued. This suggests that all there is left in the world of narrative is to devalue and to destroy. But as Bonnie Lander shows, Hautdesert cannot be dismissed as malignant:

> The courtiers of both Camelot and Hautdesert live by reference to the same moral codes of chivalry: one court seeks to abide entirely — and indeed, unquestioningly — by those codes, while the other seeks to interrogate them [...]. The distinction is one of moral insight versus moral faith. Camelot subscribes entirely to, and has absolute faith in, a set of moral codes that it has no deep understanding of; Hautdesert investigates those codes (and challenges Gawain to confront them also), while rejecting the certainty of Camelot's moral belief.[37]

The ethical treatment of Sir Gawain's story is, as Tony Hunt suggests, the 'ultimate' in 'medieval romance writing' as 'irony and ambiguity are continuously exploited in order to inhibit premature conclusions on the part of the reader'.[38] My reading of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the context of foolish behaviour highlights the fragility of the social construction of the romance world dependent as it is upon ritual and codes of behaviour. The parallels between the two courts and the negotiations between male protagonist, antagonist, and female characters demonstrate the limitations of ritual contained within these gendered roles. The rituals may not bear scrutiny or interrogation, but they do entertain. Romance has featured so much in this volume for the very reason that it is 'not affirmative, but critical, not static but dynamic',[39] and so provides opportunity for behaving like fools.

[37] Lander, 'Convention of Innocence', p. 44.

[38] Tony Hunt, 'Irony and Ambiguity in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 12 (1976), 1–16 (pp. 14–15).

[39] Hunt, 'Irony and Ambiguity', p. 15.

Index

Abraham, 204, 206
Achilles, 243
Ackermann aus Böhmen, Der, *see* Johannes von Tepl
Adalbert, archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, 213 n94
Adam de la Halle, 28
  Le Jeu de la Feuillée, 28, 40
Ajax, 243
Albero of Montreuil, archbishop of Trier, 217
Albrecht, elector of Saxony, 138
Alexander III, pope, 217
Alfons II, king of Aragon, 54
Alfons VIII, king of Castile, 54
Ali G., 176
Ariosto, 244, 258
  Orlando Furioso, 257, 258
Aristotle, 3, 183 n31, 193, 209–12, 213
  Ars Poetica, 211–12
  Ars Rhetorica, 211
  De partibus animalium, 210
  Ethica Nicomachea, 210–11
Arme Heinrich, Der, *see* Hartmann von Aue
Arnaut Daniel, 50, 52 n26
Ars Poetica, *see* Aristotle
Ars Rhetorica, *see* Aristotle
Atkinson, Rowan, 178
Augustine of Hippo, saint, 202, 264 n17, 285 n20
Austin, John, 5, 126
Bakhtin, Mikhail, 2, 6, 91, 110, 114, 121–2, 125, 212 n87
Barbour, John, *The Bruce*, 190
Battle of Maldon, The, 190 n48
Bean, Mr., *see* Atkinson, Rowan
Bebel, Heinrich, 137
Beckington, Thomas, bishop of Bath and Wells, 186
Bel Inconnu, *see* Renaud de Beaujeu
Benedict, saint, 176, 199
Benoît de Sainte-Maure, 153, 167–8
Beowulf, 182
Berinus, 19, 24, 26, 27, 30, 32, 34, 37, 39, 45
Bernard, saint, abbot of Clairvaux, 200, 201
  Formula honestae vitae, 200
Bernard the Philosopher, 158–61, 163
Béroul, 245, 261 n7, 265, 270
  Tristan, 261 n7, 265, 270
Bertolome Zorzi, 51
Beryn, Tale of, 11, 15–46
Bible, 22, 81, 204, 207 n62
  Corinthians, 2
  Daniel, 22
  Ecclesiastes, 206
  Ecclesiasticus, 206
  Genesis, 132, 204, 208 n69
  Jeremias, 204 n48
  Job, 176 n13, 204 n46, 205–6, 208 n69
  Kings, 204 n48
  Luke, 205 n53, 207, 208 n69, 285 n20
  Mark, 135, 208

Matthew, 203 n43, 207 n62, 208
Proverbs, 200 n27, 204 n46, 205 n51, 206
Psalms, 2, 4, 120, 204 n46
Wisdom, 206 n58
Blacatz, 51
Boccaccio, Giovanni, 244
Boethius, 210 n78
Boniface of Montferrat, 54
Bote, Hermann, 74, 78, 142, 149
Till Eulenspiegel, 9, 11, 66, 74, 82, 109–27, 141, 142, 149, 150
Brant, Sebastian, 4, 5, 11, 15, 40, 81–108, 142, 149
Carmina in laudem Mariae, 82
Leben des Äsops, 149
Narrenschiff / Ship of Fools, 4, 8, 9, 11, 15, 81–108, 142
Bruce, The, *see* Barbour, John
Brun I, archbishop of Cologne, 213
Brut, *see* La3amon's *Brut*; Wace, *Roman de Brut*
Buffeting, The, 281
Burgkmair, Hans, 134
Burke, Peter, 10, 110, 120–1
Büttner, Wolfgang, 129–51
Claus Narr, 129–51
Deutsche Logik, Eine, 130
Epitome historiarum oder christliche Geschichten, 130
Historische Catechismus-Predigten, 130
Kleiner Katechismus für die Wandersleute auf der Strass und die Handwerksgesellen auf der Werkstatt, 130

Caesarius, saint, bishop of Arles, 204
Canterbury Interlude, The, 15–46
Canterbury Tales, The, *see* Chaucer, Geoffrey
Cantor, Peter, 207
Carmina in laudem Mariae, *see* Brant, Sebastian
Casimir, king of Poland, 116
Catalogus illustrium virorum Germaniae, *see* Trithemius, Johannes
Chanson de Roland, 75 n9, 120
Chaplin, Charlie, 176
Charlemagne, 75 n9, 120
Charles VIII, king of France, 134
Chaucer, Geoffrey, 17, 34, 35, 39, 40–2, 45, 183, 274
The Canterbury Tales, 34, 40, 41, 274
The Franklin's Tale, 35
The General Prologue, 40
The Knight's Tale, 274
The Miller's Tale, 274
The Pardoner's Tale, 42
The House of Fame, 35
Chrétien de Troyes, 223–4, 227–33, 235–7, 239–40, 267–8
Cligès, la Fausse morte, 227, 267–8
Erec et Enide, 224–5, 231, 235, 236, 237, 268
Lancelot, le Chevalier de la Charette, 236
Perceval, le Conte du Graal, 268
Yvain, le Chevalier au lion, 229, 236, 268
Christenheit oder Europa, Die, *see* Novalis
Claus Narr, 129–51
Claus Narr, *see* Büttner, Wolfgang
Clawert, Hans, 9
Cligès, la Fausse morte, *see* Chrétien de Troyes
Cnut, king of England, 218–19
Coliphizacio, *see Buffeting, The*
Conrad I, king of Germany, 213, 216
Conrad II, Holy Roman Emperor, 213

Dad's Army, 177 n18
Dance Macabre, *see* Lydgate, John
Daniel, 22
Dante Alighieri, 264
Divine Comedy, 264 n17
Darwin, Charles, 183 n31, 264 n16
David, king of Israel, 133–4, 287, 288
de Coster, Charles, *La Légende d'Ulenspiegel*, 119, 123 n45
De partibus animalium, *see* Aristotle
Deutsche Logik, Eine, *see* Büttner, Wolfgang
Divine Comedy, *see* Dante Alighieri
Djuha, 111
Don Juan, 5–6
Don Quixote, 111
Dürer, Albrecht, 4, 83

Eco, Umberto, 193, 211
Il nome della rosa, 193

Edmund, saint, king of East Anglia, 178 n22
Edmund II, king of England, 218
Edward III, king of England, 18
Eilhart von Oberge, *Tristrant und Isalde*, 244, 245–8, 258, 261 n7, 265, 270
Ekkehard IV of St. Gall, 202
Epitome historiarum oder christliche Geschichten, *see* Büttner, Wolfgang
Erasmus, 15, 37, 120, 122
Moriae encomium / Praise of Folly, 15, 37
Erec, *see* Hartmann von Aue
Erec et Enide, *see* Chrétien de Troyes
Ernest, archbishop of Magdeburg, 138
Ernest, elector of Saxony, 138, 140
Ethica Nicomachea, *see* Aristotle
Eulenspiegel, Till, 7, 11, 73, 78, 109–27, 129–30, 137, 146, 148, 149
Eulenspiegel, Till, *see* Bote, Hermann; Kästner, Erich

Farce de Maistre Pathelin, 155–6
Faust, 130
Faust, *see* Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von
Faustus, *see* Marlowe, Christopher
Ferréol, saint, bishop of Uzès, *Regula ad Monachos*, 207 n61
Flögel, Karl Friedrich, *Geschichte der Hofnarren*, 137–8, 140, 141, 143–4
Folie Tristan de Berne, 16, 19, 25, 26 n41, 29, 30, 244, 245, 248–9, 251–3, 257, 260–1
Folie Tristan d'Oxford, 16, 19, 25, 26 n41, 28 nn46–7, 29, 30, 160, 244, 245, 249–53, 257, 260–1
Formula honestae vitae, *see* Bernard, saint
Fortuna, Lady, 264, 269
Fortunatus, 109 n1
Foucault, Michel, 122, 133, 134 n15
Frag und Antwort Salomonis und Markolfi, 149
Francis of Assisi, saint, 186, 200–1
François I, king of France, 20
Frankfurter, Philipp, 111 n9, 149
Die Geschichte des Pfarrers von Kalenberg, 82, 111 n9, 149
Franklin's Tale, The, *see* Chaucer, Geoffrey
Frederic II, king of Prussia, 7
Frederick I Barbarossa, Holy Roman Emperor, 217
Frederick II (the Gentle), elector of Saxony, 136
Frederick III (the Wise), elector of Saxony, 138, 140
Freud, Sigmund, 123 n47, 124, 183 n31
Füetrer, Ulrich, 269
Lannzilet, 269
Fulgens and Lucres, *see* Medwall, Henry

Gabriel, 22 n28
Gaufried of Auxerre, 201
Gauriel von Muntabel, *see* Konrad von Stoffeln
General Prologue, The, *see* Chaucer, Geoffrey
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 19, 22–3, 176, 181 n27, 184
Historia regum Britanniae, 22–3, 176
Geschichte der Hofnarren, *see* Flögel, Karl Friedrich
Geschichte des Pfarrers von Kalenberg, Die, *see* Frankfurter, Philipp
Gesta Chuonradi, *see* Wipo of Burgundy
Gesta Danorum, *see* Saxo Grammaticus
Gesta Normannorum ducum, 158–61, 162, 163, 164
Gesta regum Anglorum, *see* William of Malmesbury
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *Faust*, 254 n23
Gonella, 9
Good Life, The, 177
Goons, The, 176
Gorgias, 211
Gottfried von Strassburg, 243, 244, 245, 251–2, 258, 259–76
Tristan, 244, 245, 251–2, 258, 259–76
Gregorius, *see* Hartmann von Aue
Gregory of Tours, saint, 217–18
Gregory the Great, pope, 204
Grüninger, Johannes, 111
Guillaume IX of Aquitaine, count of Poitou, 54
Guillaume le Clerc, 224–5, 229–30, 241
Jaufré, 225–6, 240, 241
Le Roman de Fergus, 224–5, 229–30, 241
Guiraut de Borneilh, 50 n10
Guiraut Riquier, 50 n10

Hamlet, *see* Shakespeare, William
Hancock, Tony, 176
Harlequin, 2, 28
Harold Godwinson, king of England, 168–9
Hartmann von Aue, 243, 269, 275–6
  Der Arme Heinrich, 275–6
  Erec, 269, 271, 273
  Gregorius, 262
Heinrich von dem Türlin, *Die Krone*, 268–9
Heinrich von Freiberg, *Tristan*, 244, 245, 248 n11
Helmbrecht, *see* Wernher der Gärtner
Henry I, duke of Bavaria, 213
Henry I, king of England, 153
Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor, 215, 218
Henry II, king of England, 153, 156
Henry III, Holy Roman Emperor, 215
Henry III, king of England, 182 n29
Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor, 216
Henry V, king of England, 35
Hephaistos, 209
Hildegard of Bingen, 201 n34
Historia regum Britanniae, *see* Geoffrey of Monmouth
Historische Catechismus-Predigten, *see* Büttner, Wolfgang
History of the English Kings, The, *see* William of Malmesbury
Hitler, Adolf, 181
Homer, 209, 252
Horace, 151
House of Fame, The, *see* Chaucer, Geoffrey
Hugh IX, count of Lusignan, 185
Hugo, Byzantine emperor, 75 n9
Hurlewayne / Hellequin, 28
Hürnen Seyfrid, Der, 82

Importance of Being Earnest, The, *see* Parker, Oliver; Wilde, Oscar
Innocent III, pope, 76, 173
Isaac, 204

Jaufré, *see* Guillaume le Clerc
Jerome, saint, 202
Jesus Christ, 2, 81, 120, 135, 150, 176, 186, 196–7, 203, 204 n47, 206–8, 215, 243, 275, 281
Jeu de la Feuillée, Le, *see* Adam de la Halle
Joan, queen of Scotland, 185
Job, 205–6
Johannes von Tepl, *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*, 276 n50
John Chrysostom, 203, 208
John of Garland, 27, 28
  Parisiana Poetria, 27
John, king of England, 182, 185
Joubert, Laurent, 3
Jourdain, lord of Cabaret, 58
Judas, 203
Julius Caesar, 180, 189 n46

Kafka, Franz, *Die Verwandlung*, 262
Kästner, Erich, *Till Eulenspiegel*, 129
Kempe, Margery, 186
Kirchhoff, Hans Wilhelm, 137
Kleiner Katechismus für die Wandersleute auf der Strass und die Handwerksgesellen auf der Werkstatt, *see* Büttner, Wolfgang
Knight's Tale, The, *see* Chaucer, Geoffrey
Koestler, Arthur, 10 n39, 114, 183 n31
Konrad von Stoffeln, 273
  Gauriel von Muntabel, 273
Konrad von Würzburg, 149
  Von dem Ritter mit der halben Birn, 149
Krone, Die, *see* Heinrich von dem Türlin
Kyng Robert of Cicyle, 25 n39, 43

Labov, William, 3, 9, 113 n16
La3amon's *Brut*, 10, 12, 26 n40, 171–92
Lalebuch, 3, 127, 129
Lancelot, le Chevalier de la Charrette, *see* Chrétien de Troyes
Lannzilet, *see* Füetrer, Ulrich
Lanzelet, *see* Ulrich von Zatzikhoven
Laurentius, saint, 208
Lautensack, Hans, 137
Lazarus, 203, 207
Leben des Äsops, *see* Brant, Sebastian

Légende d'Ulenspiegel, La, *see* de Coster, Charles
Loba de Pennautier, 57–61
Loðbrók, Ragnar, 188 n43
Louis the Pious, king of the Franks, 214, 215
Louis XII, king of France, 20 n20
Luther, Martin, 135, 137, 142, 148, 150, 151,
Lydgate, John, 29 n48, 35
  Dance Macabre, 35
  The Order of Fools, 29 n48

Malory, Thomas, 172
  Morte d'Arthur, 179 n24, 256
    'Book of Tristram de Lyones', 25 n36
Mankind, 31, 32–3, 286 n22
Mann, Thomas, 263
Marlowe, Christopher, *Faustus*, 181
Martinus, saint, 207
Marx brothers, 176
Mary, Virgin, 36
Matejko, Jan, 1, 8
  Stanczyk at Queen Bona's Feast, 8
Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor, 1, 134
Medwall, Henry, *Fulgens and Lucres*, 44–5
Meinwerk, bishop of Paderborn, 218
Meninas, Las, *see* Velasquez, Diego
Méraugis de Portlesquez, *see* Raoul de Houdenc
Miller's Tale, The, *see* Chaucer, Geoffrey
Monge de Montaudon, 51, 56
Monty Pythonand the Holy Grail, 180
Morecambe and Wise, 176
Moriae encomium, *see* Erasmus
Morte d'Arthur, *see* Malory, Thomas
Mowin, Ralph, 166
Murner, Thomas, 135, 137
Mummers' Play, *see* Ovingdean Mummers' Play

Narrenschiff, *see* Brant, Sebastian
Nasreddin Hodja, 11, 109–27
Nebuchadnezzar, 43
Neidhart von Reuental, 99
Nibelungenlied, 10, 219–20, 276
Nick, Friedrich, 2, 4, 5
Nicomachean Ethics, *see* Aristotle
Nome della rosa, Il, *see* Eco, Umberto
Novalis, *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, 274

Observationes, *see* Platter, Felix
Odysseus, 243, 252
Oedipus, 262
On Gems, *see* Stricker, Der
On the Parts of Animals, *see* Aristotle
Order of Fools, The, *see* Lydgate, John
Orlando Furioso, *see* Ariosto
Otto I, duke of Swabia and Bavaria, 202
Otto I, Holy Roman Emperor, 212
Otto II, Holy Roman Emperor, 202
Otto III, Holy Roman Emperor, 214–15
Ovid, 58, 174
Ovingdean Mummer's Play, 44

Pantagruel, *see* Rabelais, François
Paracelsus, 137
Pardoner's Tale, The, *see* Chaucer, Geoffrey
Parisiana Poetria, *see* John of Garland
Parker, Oliver, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (film), 178
Parzival, *see* Wolfram von Eschenbach
Paul, saint, 2
Pauli, Johannes, 7
  Schimpf und Ernst, 7–8
Peirce, Charles Sanders, 126
Peire Vidal, 8, 47–64
  Pos tornatz sui en Proenca, 63
Pèlerinage de Charlemagne, Le, 75 n9
Perceval, le Conte du Graal, *see* Chrétien de Troyes
Petrarch, 51
Pfaffe Amis, Der, *see* Stricker, Der
Pfaffe vom Kalenberg, Der, *see* Frankfurter, Philipp
Philebus, *see* Plato
Pierrot, 2
Pirandello, Luigi, 182 n30
Plato, 183 n31, 209–10
  Philebus, 209
Platter, Felix, *Observationes*, 3
Poetics, *see* Aristotle
Pos tornatz sui en Proenca, *see* Peire Vidal
Praise of Folly, *see* Erasmus

Rabelais, François, 6, 20 n20, 20 n22, 121, 149
Pantagruel, 20 n22
Le Tiers Livre, 20 n20
Radin, Paul, 110, 122
Raimon Barral, viscount of Marseilles, 55, 57, 61, 63
Raoul de Houdenc, 235–7, 239, 240
Méraugis de Portlesquez, 229, 235–41
Romance of Yder, 223
Vengeance Raguidel, 226–8, 241
Raymond-Roger, count of Foix, 59 n54
Reeves and Mortimer, 176
Regula ad monachos, *see* Ferréol, saint
Regula Sancti Benedicti, 199, 203
Reinhart Fuchs, 149
Remus, 58
Renaud de Beaujeu, 230–2, 235
Bel Inconnu, 229, 230–5, 240, 241
Revesby Mummers' Play, 31
Rhetoric, *see* Aristotle
Richard Coeur de Lion, 56
Richard I, duke of Normandy, 153, 154 n4,
Richard II, duke of Normandy, 156–62, 166
Robert I the Magnificient, duke of Normandy, 156, 161–6
Robert, Brother, *Tristrams Saga ok Isöndar*, 244, 254, 261 n7
Rogier, Peire, 52 n26
Roi d'Angleterre et le jongleur d'Ely, Le, 19, 21, 23, 29, 36–7, 41–2, 45
Roman de Brut, *see* Wace
Roman de Fergus, Le, *see* Guillaume le Clerc
Roman de Rou, *see* Wace
Romance of Yder, *see* Raoul de Houdenc
Romulus, 58
Ruotger, 213

Sachs, Hans, 136, 137, 138
Sara, 204, 206
Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, 24
Schimpf und Ernst, *see* Pauli, Johannes
Schopenhauer, Arthur, 114, 267
Sermon Joyeux et de Grande Value, 40
Shakespeare, William, 24, 38
Hamlet, 24
Ship of Fools, *see* Brant, Sebastian
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 13, 31, 277–93
Sir Gowther, 43
Sir Tristrem, 244, 254
Sottie du Roy des Sotz, La, 20–1
Sowdone of Babylone, 175 n10
St Trinian, 182
Stanczyk, 1, 8
Stanczyk at Queen Bona's Feast, *see* Matejko, Jan
Staupitz, Johannes, 137
Stricker, Der, 65–79, 201 n33, 215
Der Pfaffe Amis, 11, 65–79, 111
Von Edelsteinen / On Gems, 76–7
Suite du Merlin, 262 n10
Sulpicius Severus, 207

Tarlton, Richard (Dick), 38
Tavola Ritonda, 244, 256, 257
Terramagnino of Pisa, 51
Thietmar of Merseburg, 214
Thomas of England, 244, 245, 254–5, 258, 259–76
Roman de Tristan, 244, 254–5, 258, 259–76
Tiers Livre, Le, *see* Rabelais, François
Titurel, *see* Wolfram von Eschenbach
Todorov, Tzvetan, 119–20
Triboulet, 20 n20
Trier, Walter, 129, 217
Tristan romances, *see* Béroul; Eilhart von Oberge; *Folie Tristan de Berne*; *Folie Tristan d'Oxford*; Gottfried von Strassburg; Heinrich von Freiberg; Robert, Brother; *Tavola Ritonda*; Thomas of England; Ulrich von Türheim; Wagner, Richard
Tristan en Prose, 244, 245, 255, 257, 260–61
Tristano Riccardiano, 244
Tristano Veneto, 244
Trithemius, Johannes, *Catalogus illustrium virorum Germaniae*, 82
Twain, Mark, 177

Uc de Lescura, 51
Ulenspiegel, Dil, *see* Eulenspiegel, Till

Ulenspiegel, *see* Bote, Hermann
Ulrich von Türheim, 244, 245, 247 n11, 260, 264
  Tristan, 244, 245, 247 n11, 260
Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, 268
Ulster Saga, The, 179 n24

Velasquez, Diego, *Las Meninas*, 1
Vengeance Raguidel, *see* Raoul de Houdenc
Verwandlung, Die, *see* Kafka, Franz
Vitae sanctae Wiboradae, 207
Von dem Ritter mit dem halben Birn, *see* Konrad von Würzburg
Von Edelsteinen, *see* Stricker, Der

Wace, 12, 24, 153–70, 173, 174, 176–7, 184, 185, 186, 188 n44, 190
  Roman de Brut, 24, 173, 174, 176–7, 184, 185, 186, 188 n44, 190
  Roman de Rou, 12, 153–70
Wagner, Richard, *Tristan und Isolde*, 262, 263, 266, 267, 276
Waltharius, 216
Wernher der Gärtner, 271, 272
  Helmbrecht, 271
Wiborada, saint, 207
Widukind, 213
Wilde, Oscar, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 178
William de Frise, 187 n41
William of Arques, 167–8
William of Malmesbury, 165, 166
  Gesta regum Anglorum, 165
William of Ockham, 45
William the Conqueror, king of England, 156, 162, 166, 167–8, 169–70
Wipo of Burgundy, *Gesta Chuonradi*, 213
Wizard of Id, The, 1
Wodehouse, P. G., 177
Wogan, Terry, 176
Wolfram von Eschenbach, 243–4, 276 n53
  Parzival, 244, 271, 274
  Titurel, 276 n53

Yvain, le Chevalier au lion, *see* Chrétien de Troyes

Zimmerische Chronik, 147 n51
Zumthor, Paul, 126
Zygmunt Stary, king of Poland, 1

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